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Glories and Privileges
OF
ST. JOSEPH.

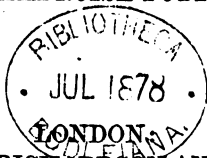


**THE
GLORIES AND PRIVILEGES
OF
ST. JOSEPH.**

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THE
Glories and Privileges
OF
ST. JOSEPH.

Abridged from the French of
FATHER AMBROISE POTTON, O.P.



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PEDICATION

To the Glorious Patriarch.

O holy Patriarch Joseph, I desire to place my whole life under thy especial protection, and implore thee to undertake the guidance of my soul. Forgive my past sloth, and the indifference which I have hitherto felt towards thee. In my pride I could not comprehend all the beauty and power that were hidden and mysteriously veiled in thy holy life. But now, as a prodigal child, I come to thee, enlightened by grace, beseeching thee to pardon my past indifference, and to accept me as one of thy devoted children. Obtain for me, O glorious Patriarch, and for all who may read this little book, which I have undertaken to write in order to increase thy glory, obtain for us a deep and true humility. Grant that I may from this moment look upon myself as the

most unfaithful and the most culpable of my brethren. Obtain for me this grace, that in the midst of the most harsh and severe reproaches, I may sincerely feel in the depth of my soul that I deserve far more; that no blame, no insults from creatures, can equal my offences against my Creator.

All things will be possible to me if thou wilt only undertake the direction of my soul. Obtain for me a hatred of self, and of all that belongs to self, and firm trust in the infinite mercy of God, Who has compassion upon all, even the most rebellious of His creatures.

Having thus destroyed self within me, lead me, O holy Joseph, notwithstanding my miseries, or rather on account of my miseries, lead me to Jesus and Mary, the healer of the sick, and the refuge of sinners; to Jesus, in Whom are hidden the treasures of the wisdom and knowledge of the Divinity; to Mary, the Daughter of the Eternal Father, the Mother of the Eternal Son, the Spouse of the Holy Spirit, that I may through them obtain eternal life. Amen.

THE
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CHAPTER I.

UTILITY OF DEVOTION TO ST. JOSEPH.

THAT devotion to St. Joseph is most useful, and one of the most certain means of advancing in perfection, can be proved by numerous and convincing arguments. I will take one based upon the words of Scripture. St. Paul, writing to the Romans, says: "The gifts and the vocation of God are without repentance." "*Sine poenitentia enim sunt dona et vocatio Dei.*" But is it really true that the gifts of God are always bestowed irrevocably? Does God never withdraw a grace or a vocation

which He has once given? Do we not see many Christians who have been baptized and confirmed, and yet who fall into heresy and infidelity, thus losing their inheritance and their rights as Christians and children of God? It is indeed possible to lose a gift which has once been given, through the unworthiness of the receiver. God will withdraw His gifts from those who render themselves unworthy of them by sin; but according to the divine intention every gift of God should endure eternally, and even increase by an admirable development. One only thing puts an obstacle in the way of His mercy, and this is sin, by which we rebel against God. God is not the author of sin; it is the offspring of man's free will: and God will never cast off those whom He has once justified, unless they turn away from Him. God is faithful to all who are faithful to Him; and therefore, when we are speaking of St. Joseph, that man privileged above all other men, that man who is spoken of by Holy Scripture as supereminently "just," we may without hesitation affirm that the gifts which God has given him

will endure eternally, and that in his case, without doubt, "the gifts of God are without repentance."

Let us, then, examine at once what gifts and privileges have been vouchsafed by God to the glorious St. Joseph; and in order to realize them more fully we will transport ourselves in spirit to the Holy House of Nazareth. In this blessed house we shall see only three persons, but those three the most holy, and the most august that have ever lived; Jesus Christ, the King of Glory, the Lord of Lords, the Son of God; Mary, His Immaculate Mother, the purest and highest of creatures; Joseph, the greatest saint of the old or new law, the most humble of men, the spouse of Mary, and foster-father of Jesus. In order more truly to understand the position St. Joseph held in this holy house, let us imagine that some poor man, weighed down with years, or some person afflicted with cruel pains either of body or soul, should crave admittance into this house, which resembled heaven because it was the home of Jesus. Suppose that, not satisfied with a

simple alms, he should ask permission to enter for a short time into this blessed house, to warm himself by the fire, to listen, above all, to the sweet words of love and consolation which Jesus speaks. Who, I ask you, who would be the one to introduce this stranger into the house of Nazareth? Who, in this divine family, would be the one to grant this bold request, and give to this unfortunate man the right to enter into that happy abode?

Would it be the humble Mary, who in her merciful compassion would gently draw the stranger in, and bid him be seated at the frugal table?

No, indeed, the Queen of Heaven and earth gives to wives an example of profound respect for all the laws of marriage. It is not the wife who commands; the husband alone is invested with authority. This is the teaching of St. Paul. "Let wives be subject to their husbands, as to the Lord." "As the Church is subject to Jesus Christ, so should wives submit in all things to their husbands." "Let the husband love his wife, but let the wife fear her husband." St. Peter teaches us the

same. "Let wives be subject to their husbands; let them imitate Sarah when she obeyed Abraham, giving him the name of lord." It is true indeed that innocent Mary is very different from guilty Eve, who through her sinfulness caused the loss of the whole human race. Mary, on the contrary, is the reparaatrix of the faults of Eve, and brings us treasures greater even than those we have lost. It is true also that St. Joseph was in no way superior to Mary, who surpassed him incomparably in all her natural and supernatural gifts. But Mary, when she was upon earth, strove rather to hide the greatness of her privileges than to assert them. She came to accomplish perfectly all the commands of God, and to preach efficaciously, by her example, submission and obedience, to all who are under authority. Can we then imagine that Mary would take upon herself to introduce this stranger into the house? To do so would be a decided act of independence, an act of which a husband might justly complain. How then could the most humble Mary, the most perfect pattern of all virtues, be

guilty of usurping a right which, in justice, did not belong to her?

But perhaps Jesus will accomplish this act of charity towards the unfortunate beggar of whom we are speaking. Is not Jesus the most merciful of men? will not He undertake to console this afflicted one, and to bring him into His house? No, surely not; this is not a case of compassion, but of lawful authority. It is true that Jesus is the Creator of the universe, it is true that He alone can open to man the gates of heaven: but we know that during His mortal life He emptied Himself of His glory; we know by the words of the gospel, that, at Nazareth, "He was subject to" His parents as a most submissive and devoted Son. How then can we suppose Him to act in a manner which would not be tolerated in a well-regulated family; how imagine that He would take upon Himself an authority which even His Mother does not claim? Since Jesus and Mary, then, will not presume to admit the stranger, what resource has he save to appeal to him whom we can and must call the head of the Holy Family? Joseph, in

virtue of his conjugal and paternal authority, has power over his Spouse and his Son ; he may dispose of their time, of their actions, of their words ; he must decide what good works he wishes exercised in his house ; he has the right to determine who shall be admitted into his dwelling, upon what conditions, and for what length of time. He turns, then, to the poor beggar, and addresses him with that air of gentle authority which belongs to the foster-father of Jesus : " Enter, my friend," he lovingly says ; " rest under our roof : if you are cold this fire will warm you ; if you are hungry we will give you food ; if you are sad we will comfort you ; if you are wounded we will bind up your wounds ; stay with us, I willingly receive you. Take courage and hope in the Lord." Now let us remember the fundamental principle that we mentioned above. We have proved that the gifts of God for St. Joseph are, and must be, "*without repentance ;*" therefore, as St. Joseph received from God the privilege of being the only one who could admit persons into the sanctuary of Nazareth, it follows from what we have said, that he must

still possess, and will eternally possess, this glorious prerogative.

It is true things are totally changed now ; Mary is no longer the submissive and devoted wife, she is the glorious Queen of Heaven and earth. Jesus is no longer the obedient and respectful Son, Who veiled His majesty under the appearance of a poor carpenter ; He is now the King of kings, and Lord of Lords, equal to His Father in all things. St. Joseph cannot therefore any longer command Jesus and Mary. But still the greatness of this prerogative must remain unchanged. The manner in which his power is exercised is different, but the fact remains, and will ever remain, that St. Joseph has the special privilege of bringing souls to Jesus and Mary.

O Blessed St. Joseph, what a light this throws upon my past life ! What have I been doing since the day when God, in His infinite mercy, touched my heart and drew me to His service ? Notwithstanding my many sins and imperfections, it seems to me that from the moment of my conversion, my great wish has been to live near to

Jesus and Mary. How happy should I be if I could be admitted into their holy company and dwell without distraction united to them. I felt that if I could but come near to Jesus, my weakness would be strengthened, all my troubles would be turned into joy, and "my heart and my flesh would exult in the Lord." I knew that if I could but approach the Immaculate Mary, I might hope to obtain a little of her heavenly purity. The sight of her beauty would destroy in me all love of creatures, and remove all stains from my soul. Therefore, for a long time I have desired, and endeavoured as much as lay in my power, to obtain the grace of union with Jesus and Mary—the grace of admittance into the Holy House of Nazareth. But, alas! my hopes were never realized. I knocked, but the door was not opened; I entreated, but my prayer was not answered, and I find myself still enchained by self, still held down by earthly ties, and far from Jesus and Mary. Now, O holy Joseph, I seem to see why my efforts have hitherto been unsuccessful; I wished to enter into the abode where thou wert mas-

ter, and I did not apply to thee for admission. Thou wishedst to teach me by a long and sad experience, how impossible it is to attain to union with Jesus and Mary without thy help. Therefore, I beseech thee, O glorious Patriarch, forgive my past ignorance, receive me as thy servant and devout client, and allow me, notwithstanding my unworthiness, to dwell in thy company. Let me be a companion of thy labours, a guest at thy table; allow me to remain with thee for the rest of my life. If thou wilt be favourable to me, O glorious saint, I shall at length attain the end of all my desires; I shall be near to Jesus, and able to listen to the teachings of heavenly wisdom which fall from His lips. I shall live with Mary, whose dazzling beauty ravishes the angels and saints. Now, at length, I may safely hope that my longings will be satisfied; now, through thy prayer, O most holy Joseph, all obstacles will be overcome. And I, in return for so great a favour, I will endeavour to make known to others the efficacy of thy intercession. I will prove to them incontestably that the power of uniting them to Jesus

and Mary, belongs to thee in an especial manner, and that they cannot attain to it without thy help.

Devotion to St. Joseph is, therefore, as we have seen, not only useful to some souls at certain times, and in certain states of life, but it is most useful and even necessary to all Christians without exception, in all circumstances and at all times.*

* In writing this chapter on devotion to St. Joseph, we are speaking of the present times and future ages, but not of the *past*. St. Joseph was but little known or honoured in past times, as we shall explain later on, and therefore during that time it was not necessary to invoke him in order to obtain his powerful protection. But in this century the state of things is changed ; St. Joseph has risen like a brilliant star above the horizon, and we do not hesitate to affirm, that it is impossible for any one to attain to true sanctity unless they cultivate a tender love towards, and a filial confidence in, this great Saint,

CHAPTER II.

THE GREAT HOLINESS OF THE GLORIOUS
ST. JOSEPH.

So many, and such powerful reasons come before our minds, when we undertake to prove the great holiness of this venerable patriarch, that it is difficult to choose between them. We will begin by the old Testament, and see what light may be thrown upon our subject by the history of another Joseph, son to another Jacob, that Joseph who was sold by his brethren, and afterwards so gloriously exalted by Pharaoh. Even if we had only the authority of St. Augustin, or St. Bernard, for the comparison we are about to draw between these two saints, we could not be accused of rashness; but in this case we have the authority of the Church herself, who, in her Office for the Feast of St. Joseph (19th of March), continually quotes the book of Genesis with the holy Gospels,

as if to show us that those two Josephs are intimately united to each other; and that in the life of the first Joseph, we shall find foreshadowed the prerogatives and glorious privileges of the second.

Let us then remark, in the first place, that the Patriarch Jacob had a strong predilection for Joseph—he loved him more than all his other children. Who, then, does this Israel represent? He is one of the most illustrious types of Jesus Christ, and thus the love he bears to his son Joseph is a type of the special love of Jesus Christ for the Joseph of the New Law. For although in one sense Joseph is the father of our Lord, still in a true and perfect sense he is His son, and receives from Him all his holiness, and all his privileges. Therefore, Jesus Christ loves St. Joseph with a special and supereminent love, surpassing the love which He bears to the other saints. But the love of Jesus Christ is not sterile or ineffectual, like human love. The love of Jesus Christ naturally produces graces, virtues, and perfections in those He loves, as the rays of the sun produce flowers and fruits. What

an immense harvest of virtue and grace Joseph must have acquired during those long years when Jesus lived with him and loved him !

If we consider the illustrious prophecy which Israel made when, in blessing his children, he foretold to each his future lot, we shall find in it many glorious predictions which apply to our Joseph far more than to the ancient patriarch. Jacob, alluding to the name of Joseph, which signifies increase, augmentation, repeats twice these remarkable words: "*Filius accrescens Joseph, filius accrescens.*" This prophecy was clearly proved by the future of Joseph's children ; but still more will it apply to our glorious Saint, when we consider how he was chosen from a state of poverty and obscurity, to become the virginal Spouse of the Queen of Heaven, and the foster-father of Jesus Christ. What an incalculable increase of grace and of virtue must not Joseph have received each day, nay, each hour that he spent in the Holy House of Nazareth ! What an increase of love Joseph is even now obtaining

in the hearts of the faithful,—what an increase of glory in the universal Church!

Jacob also speaks of the beauty of Joseph; *filius accrescens et decorus aspectu*,” “*a growing son, beautiful to behold.*” We should doubtless be justified in applying this expression to the exterior beauty of our Saint, for his virtues must have caused his face to shine with a marvellous beauty and splendour. The countenance of a man, like a faithful mirror, reflects his interior state; how kind, then, must have been the look, how bright the smile, how peaceful the demeanour of him who was the shadow upon earth of the Eternal Father! But these prophetic words must be applied in a far higher sense to the soul of Joseph. Corporal beauty is as nothing compared to the graces of the soul. Other saints have great and wondrous merits and virtues, but the soul of Joseph must surpass them all in harmony and beauty. Let us often meditate on the greatness of the foster-father of Jesus, in order to excite in ourselves feelings of respect and admiration.

Mark now the abundant blessings which Jacob calls down upon the head of this his

favourite son. He seems unable to find expressions strong enough by which to demonstrate the future greatness of Joseph. "The God of thy father shall be thy helper, and the Almighty shall bless thee with the blessings of heaven above, of the deep that lieth beneath, with the blessings of the breasts and womb. The blessings of thy father are strengthened with the blessings of his fathers, until the desire of the everlasting hills shall come; may they be upon the head of Joseph, and upon the crown of the Nazarite among his brethren." Can we not see our glorious Patriarch clearly foreshown in these words, deluged, and, as it were, overwhelmed as he was with favours and gifts from on high?

But let us pass on to the clearer light of the New Testament, and see what proofs we can find in the Gospels of the surpassing holiness of the Spouse of Mary. Brief as the words of the Evangelist may be, we learn from them that Joseph was chosen to be the Spouse of Mary—the guardian of Jesus; that he accompanied them to Bethlehem, to Egypt, and to Nazareth. It is generally believed that St. Joseph, lived

until our Lord had attained the age of 25, or even 29 years, although the last time he is explicitly mentioned is, when, with paternal love and solicitude, he sought for Jesus in the Temple, at the age of twelve years. Thus, for nearly thirty years, this holy patriarch dwelt alone with Jesus and Mary, watching and guiding with his gentle hand, the growth of these two heavenly plants, in age and grace before God and man. Now, what graces, what virtues, must not this holy intimacy with Jesus and Mary have produced in a soul so well disposed as that of Joseph? We read in the Gospel, that, when Mary visited her cousin Elizabeth, at her presence St. John leaped in his mother's womb, and was, by the power of the Holy Ghost, freed from original sin. But Joseph possessed in his house for years the precious treasure which was only accorded for three months to Zachary and Elizabeth. What lights, what graces, would not the words, the presence of Mary produce in his soul! We read, also, in the Gospel, that a woman who had suffered for 18 years from a cruel malady, was instantly and completely cured by one

touch of our Lord's garment. These bodily cures were types of the far greater miracles which Jesus operates in the souls of those who love Him. What then must the holiness of Joseph be, who for 30 years lived in most loving and most intimate union with his God,—who not only touched His garments, but with a father's tenderness, nursed Him in His infancy, and instructed Him in His youth?

We must also remember that Jesus and Mary were bound to St. Joseph by all the ties of love and gratitude. He was not a stranger, or an enemy to them. He was a father, a spouse, a friend, who, forgetful of self, devoted his entire life to their service. He was in reality, and most truly, the husband of Mary, although without prejudice to her virginal chastity. As her true and loving spouse, he protected her: he supported her by his hard and constant labour; he shared in her joys and sorrows; he directed her by his advice in all her actions, and thus allowed her to practise the virtue of obedience. He saved her from the calumnies and insults which would have fallen to her share, had he not,

by his presence, veiled from the eyes of men the ineffable mysteries operated in her by the Holy Ghost. Surely, Mary could not be ungrateful! Mary, who is constantly bestowing favours and benefits, even on the most unworthy, even on the enemies of her Son! What graces would she not confer upon St. Joseph, who served her and loved her with so much faithfulness, for so many years, whose life was devoted to her and to Jesus?

And would not Jesus be most grateful and most liberal towards His father? Let no one be surprised that in this book we call St. Joseph the father of Jesus. St. Luke gives us the example, and we need not fear to do wrong in following him. "*Et erat Pater ejus et Mater mirantes super his quæ dicebantur de illo.*" "*Ecce Pater tuus et ego dolentes quærebamus te.*" Joseph is really the father of Jesus in a truer and higher sense than is generally believed. According to the most common opinion, Mary was not only espoused, but actually married to St. Joseph when the Archangel Gabriel appeared to her at the Annunciation. Now the property of marriage is

union; by marriage the property of the wife becomes the property of the husband, and in the same way all that belongs to the husband belongs equally to the wife. If this is the case in an ordinary marriage, when the affections of the two are neither very pure nor very deep, how much truer and more intimate would this union be in this marriage, which was contracted from feelings of the tenderest and most chaste love? Surely, Joseph could have nothing that did not belong equally to Mary, and Mary, on her side, could possess nothing that did not belong to Joseph. When, therefore, after this union the Son of God was born in an ineffable manner of the Blessed Virgin, can we say that He belonged only to Mary? No, certainly, for what the wife has belongs also to the husband. This field belonged to Joseph, and therefore the Divine Plant that grew and flowered in it must be his.

Joseph is far more than the adopted or foster-father of Jesus; he did not admit Jesus into his house as a stranger received through pity, or as a child adopted for a time and from mercenary motives. Jesus,

from the first moment of His miraculous conception, belonged to Joseph by the natural course of things; and Joseph had, and *must* have had for Him all the love and affection of a true father. This is beautifully expressed by St. Francis of Sales in one of his Conferences on St. Joseph. He says: "I have been in the habit of observing, in order to render the comparison more conformable to the purity of the saints of whom I am speaking, that if a dove should bear a date in its bill, and drop it in a garden, assuredly the palm tree arising from the seed would belong to the proprietor of the garden. Now, if this be correct, who can entertain a doubt that, as the Holy Ghost, the celestial Dove, dropped this divine fruit in the enclosed garden of the Blessed Virgin, a garden sealed and surrounded with the fences of virginity and immaculate chastity, a garden which belonged to St. Joseph, she belonging to him as his spouse; I repeat, who can entertain a doubt, or venture to assert that this Divine palm tree, which produces fruits that confer immortality, does not belong, in a great measure, to the great St. Joseph?" O

what a light these considerations throw upon the dignity and holiness of him whom Jesus owned as His father !

And now, what will Jesus do for His father, the spouse of His virginal Mother ? By what incomprehensible treasures of grace and of glory will He not reward His father for the care and protection which He received from him in life ? What recompense will He give for those hours of grief and anxiety which He caused by His miraculous conception ? What reward for the fears and anguish of the flight into Egypt ? But, above all, how will He repay him for that ardent tender love, known only to His Sacred Heart, the strength and depth of which we can never fathom ?

Jesus Christ owed to Joseph the sceptre of David, and His legitimate right as King over Israel. This sovereign power rested on Joseph, and he transferred it naturally to Jesus as his Son. Joseph seems also to be almost necessary to the Incarnation. The "Word made flesh," required, first, a pure and immaculate mother, who should bring Him forth to the

world, feed Him with her virginal milk, and watch over Him in infancy. But He required also a father to save Mary's reputation, to console, protect, and guide her; to support and work for Him. The Incarnate Word, then, needed on earth, a pure, holy, spotless guardian, who should fulfil towards Him the office of father, and who should be the worthy spouse of His Immaculate Mother. Joseph was the man chosen amongst all men to fulfil this august mission. May we not, then, truly say that Jesus owes to Joseph a debt of gratitude?

Other saints have generally received from God some special mission and office towards the Church. St. Paul was charged to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles who did not know the faith. St. Peter was chosen as the rock on which the Church of Christ was built, and was charged to feed the lambs and sheep of Jesus, and to confirm his brethren in the faith. These are most sublime functions, and we cannot doubt that St. Peter and St. Paul received great and special graces to enable them to fulfil the great work for which they were

fitted. But we do not think we can be accused of exaggeration, when we assert that Joseph has received still more ; he has been chosen, not merely to govern and defend the Church, but to guide and defend the Blessed Virgin Mary and her divine Son. Which is greatest and most perfect, Mary the Mother of God, or the entire Church spread all over the world, and enduring through all ages until the end of time ?

Mary most certainly surpasses in holiness and dignity all men and angels : the most holy, when compared to her, are as a grain of sand. Do we not also know that the Sacred Humanity of Jesus Christ glorifies God more than all the saints united, that all the armies of the heavenly courts cannot, to the end of time, merit as much as Jesus Christ did in one moment of His life upon earth ? But whilst other saints have been chosen to guide and protect the Church, and often only a portion of the Church, St. Joseph, and St. Joseph alone, was chosen by God to guide and protect Jesus and Mary for thirty years. If, then, we consider the graces given to other saints

immense, what can we say of the grace given to Joseph? What prudence, what faith, what respect, what love must *he* have had, to be chosen to command Mary the Mother of God, and Jesus the Incarnate Word?

We may then say, in conclusion to this chapter, that Joseph holds the first rank among the saints; Mary alone is above him, for she, the incomparable Mother of God, can never be compared to any saint, holding, as she does, a position apart from all others.*

* It may seem that the words of Jesus Christ may be opposed to this assertion, when speaking of St. John the Baptist, He said: "Amen, dico vobis: non surrexit inter natos mulierum major Joanne Baptista; qui autem minor est in regno Cœlorum, major est illo." Matth. xi. "I say to you: there hath not risen among them that are born of women, a greater than John the Baptist; yet he that is the lesser in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." Or as St. Luke puts it: "Amen, dico vobis: Major inter natos mulierum propheta Joanne Baptista nemo est: qui autem minor est in regno Dei major est illo." "Amongst those that are born of women, there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist. But he that is the lesser in the kingdom of God is greater than he." These words, however, need not de-

stroy or contradict the conclusion that has been drawn. In the first place, it is impossible to take these words in so universal a sense as appears at first sight. Our Lord makes no exception, but our Lady must necessarily be excepted; and many commentators think the Apostles should also be excluded, as their ministry appears higher and more sacred than that of St. John. Some, following St. Jerome, affirm that Our Lord was, in this case, speaking solely of the Saints of the Old Testament, especially of the prophets, with whom the Jews, who were still in ignorance of the New Law, would naturally compare St. John the Baptist. Those who follow this explanation make use of it in order to except our Lady and the Apostles, who are rightly considered as belonging to the New Testament. We may also apply it to St. Joseph, who, having lived for so many years in the familiar company of Jesus and Mary, may justly be reckoned among the Saints of the New Law, although he died before the Crucifixion.

We might also say that our Lord was speaking of known saints, those whose illustrious names were engraven on the hearts of the Jews. The word of St. Matthew, *surrexit*, would seem to confirm this opinion: "there hath not *risen*" above the horizon of history, so to speak, a greater saint than St. John. Our Lord is speaking of well-known saints. He does not say there is no hidden saint greater than John the Baptist, He merely affirms that no greater saint has *risen* amongst them. St. Luke expressly mentions the word prophet, that there is no greater prophet than St. John, which we do not deny. It seems necessary to adopt one or other of these explanations, for it is difficult to believe that St. John

the Baptist could surpass St. Joseph in grace or glory. Since all the sanctity of the saints comes from their union with the Incarnate Word, Joseph must be holier than St. John, for he was far more closely united to Him. St. John only heard His voice and enjoyed His presence for a short time, but Joseph spent long years in constant and most intimate communication with Him. St. John only exercised one act of authority over Jesus by baptizing Him in the waters of the Jordan. But St. Joseph acted as His superior for many years. We may therefore safely conclude, that these words of our Lord do not contradict our assertion, and that we may consider St. Joseph as the greatest among the saints. We say this, however, with all submission to higher authorities. We give it as our own opinion, nothing more, and wish all the passages in which we speak of St. Joseph as the greatest of saints, to be understood in this way. Suarez (who is considered one of the greatest theologians), thinks it probable that St. Joseph surpasses all saints in glory, even the Apostles and St. John the Baptist, because his office was greater than theirs.

CHAPTER III.

THE GREAT POWER OF ST. JOSEPH.

There is more harmony and justice in the kingdom of heaven than in the kingdoms of this world. In this world we often find wicked and licentious men invested with the highest and most universal authority, whilst virtuous and religious men appear to exercise little, if any, influence over society. But in heaven things are otherwise arranged. Heaven is the kingdom of God, and therefore those who in life were most intimately united to God, rank highest there, and possess the greatest power. This reflection alone will suffice to convince us of the great power of St. Joseph, both in heaven and in the Church, which is the kingdom of God upon earth. Joseph, as we have seen, is the greatest Saint of the Old and New Testament; his power must therefore be immense. We shall find in the history of Joseph, the son of Jacob, some figures of the spiritual au-

thority which has been vouchsafed to the father of Jesus. In his youth, Joseph had two dreams in which was foretold his future greatness. He thus relates them: "I thought we were binding sheaves in the field, and my sheaf arose, as it were, and stood, and your sheaves, standing about, bowed down before my sheaf." Does not this first dream signify the respect and love which the other saints will bear towards St. Joseph, who surpasses them all in glory and merits, as Joseph did his brethren? But the second dream is even more significant of the prerogatives of St. Joseph: "I saw in a dream, as it were, the sun, the moon, and eleven stars, worshipping me." The stars represent the saints, and the sun and the moon are no other than Jesus and Mary, Jesus the Sun of Justice, and Mary whom the Church compares to the moon. They respected and obeyed Joseph, in whom the prophecy was thus more fully realized than in the son of Rachel, whose mother died before his exaltation at the court of Pharaoh.

When after this we read the great and glorious privileges that were granted to the

ancient patriarch Joseph, do we not seem to see before our eyes the triumph of the second Joseph, of him who was called the father of the King of Kings; of him who was invested with the highest dignity in the house of Nazareth, and whom God wishes all men to honour, placing him on a throne inferior only to that of Mary? This is what the Church alludes to, when, in the office of the 19th of March, she makes use of this antiphon, which is three times repeated, "*Constituit eam Dominum domus sue, et principem omnis possessionis sue.*" "He has made him the master of his house, and the lord of all his possessions." And again, in the second Vespers: "*Ecce fidelis servus et prudens quem constituit Dominus super familiam suam.*" "Behold the faithful and prudent servant whom God has appointed over His family." Is not St. Joseph in very truth the prudent and faithful servant established by God over the Holy Family on earth, and also over all Christian nations? St. Joseph is indeed a prince who has a right to the respect and obedience of all the souls which God governs by his graces. These titles, then,

justly belong to St. Joseph, although wholly inadequate to express his power.

There is a very striking circumstance mentioned in the book of Genesis, which must not be passed over. The patriarch Joseph, although he had doubtless universal power over the land of Egypt, seems to make the distribution of wheat the chief of his duties. For seven years he was occupied in storing up and preserving corn for the time of famine; and during the seven years of famine he undertook the distribution of it. Does not this at once bring to our minds the foster-father of our Lord? Does not Jesus call Himself a grain of wheat when He says: "Unless the grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it remaineth alone; but if it die it will bring forth much fruit"? And again: "I am the Bread of life; I am the living Bread come down from heaven." Thus, the power of Joseph over the Egyptian corn prefigured the power St. Joseph was to exercise over Jesus Christ the living Bread. And we, are we not suffering from famine, as the world was in the days of the patriarch Joseph? Do not our souls yearn for

union with God, for more grace, for more love ; are we not yet far distant from the perfection to which we might have attained ? What are we to do in our urgent need ? To whom shall we go to obtain food to satisfy this craving of our souls ? God speaks to us as Pharaoh spoke to his people : “*Ite ad Joseph et quidquid ipse vobis dixerit facite,*” “Go to Joseph and do *all* that he shall tell you.” Turning, then, to the “faithful and prudent servant whom the Lord has placed over all His possessions,” we will say to him, “O, Joseph, have pity on our misery. Jesus Himself sends us to thee, to obtain at thy hands food for our souls. What we want is grace, the grace that thou distributest so freely to thy clients ; we want Jesus Christ Himself, Who loves to give Himself through thee to men.”

But if, leaving the Old Testament, we turn to the New, we can no longer entertain a doubt of the power St. Joseph has to help his clients. We need only call to mind one fact which is attested by the Evangelists. Jesus and Mary, when on earth, were subject to Joseph. St. Ber-

nard tells us that Mary is all-powerful with God, that she obtains, without fail, all she asks from Him. She has but to remind Him that she is His Mother, in order to receive all she desires. Joseph has in some sort a right over Mary herself. No one can doubt of the omnipotence of Jesus Christ, Who is "true God of true God," equal to His Father in all things. But Joseph has power over Jesus. On earth Joseph, as husband and father, exercised a real and complete authority over Jesus and Mary. Mary, the model of spouses, was obedient and submissive in all things to St. Joseph, and the Gospel expressly tells us that Jesus "was subject to him," by which we must understand that He was perfectly obedient to him as the model of sons. Joseph has committed no sin, which could alone deprive him of the gifts of God; therefore in heaven, in a far higher and more supernatural degree, he exercises universal power, now, as formerly, in heaven as at Nazareth, St. Joseph need only express a wish, and Jesus and Mary are anxious to fulfil it.

The Church evidently recognises this

great power which we attribute to St. Joseph. Some may even be surprised to find such strong expressions used in the Sacred Liturgy. Would that their astonishment might change to devotion, and bring them, in a spirit of loving veneration, to the feet of him to whom Jesus was subject.

This is what the Church sings on the 19th of March :

“Coelitum Joseph, decus atque nostræ
Certa spes vitæ, columenque mundi
Quas tibi læti canimus benignus
Suscipe laudes.”

“O Joseph, glory of the blessed, firm hope of our life, pillar of the world, receive the joyful praise we give to thee.”

Joseph is here called the “*firm* hope of our life,” “*certa spes vitæ*.” The very same expression which the Church applies to our Lady in the Salve Regina; “*Vita dulcedo, et spes nostra*.” “Our life, our sweetness, and our hope.” Thus clearly pointing out to us where we are to turn in order to obtain eternal life; not only may

we trust that if we apply to St. Joseph he will help us, but it is certain, "*certa*," that if we honour him, and with all confidence place ourselves under his guidance, we shall attain to everlasting felicity.

St. Joseph is also called the pillar or support of the world, "*columen mundi*." Magnificent expression, which shows us the Church and the whole world supported by St. Joseph. But need we wonder that St. Joseph should be chosen to support the world, since when on earth he bore in his arms the Creator of the world, and supported Him by his labour?

Let us see now what more the Church says of our glorious saint. In the first response for Matins we find these words: "But the Lord was with Joseph, and He gave him favour in the sight of the chief keeper of the prison, who delivered into his hands all the prisoners that were kept in custody; whatever was done was under him, for the Lord was with him, and made all that he did to prosper." Now who can these prisoners represent, who were given so completely into Joseph's power? These captives represent us, you and me, and all

the human race. Are we not indeed captives; captives to the devil, who has so often conquered us by his stratagems and violence; captives to sin, which we have so often committed; captives to our imperfections, which we have not courage to overcome; captives to our sufferings, to our infirmities, our errors; bound by a thousand chains which are invisible to our own eyes, blinded by self-love? But let us take courage; here is a motive of consolation. The Lord has placed us under the care of St. Joseph, and whatever he commands us will be for our good, "for the Lord is with him, and directs all his works." We seem almost to hear the loving and paternal words which the Church puts into his mouth: "The Lord has made me as the father of the King, and the chief of His house. Fear not. It is for your salvation that God has sent me into this land. Come to me, and I will give you all the good things of Egypt, and you shall feed on the fat of the land."

O Joseph, be mindful of thy promise; give us the precious treasures of grace, give us the Divine Bread of Life, so that,

supported and encouraged by thee, we may attain to the joys of eternal life. Assist us, O Lord, by the merits of the Spouse of Thy most holy Mother, that what of ourselves we cannot obtain, may be given to us through his intercession with Thee, Who livest and reignest, one God, world without end. Amen.

We should not consider this chapter complete if we were to omit the beautiful words of St. Teresa, in which she celebrates the power and goodness of St. Joseph. They are to be found in many books; but still some may not be acquainted with them, and those who have read them before will be glad to meet them again. "I do not remember," she says, "ever to have asked anything from St. Joseph, which I have not obtained. If I could tell all the graces which I have obtained; all the perils, both of body and soul, from which I have been delivered through the intercession of this my beloved patron, the world would be amazed. God seems to have given to other saints the power to succour us on some particular occasions, but experience proves that our

glorious saint can help us in all our necessities; and by this our Lord shews us, that as on earth He was subject to St. Joseph in all things, so in heaven He still condescends to fulfil his wishes. Many people have experienced this when they have applied to this glorious saint, and the great graces they have received from him have filled them with love and gratitude towards their great protector. Would that I could inspire all the world with love and devotion towards this great saint. I have never yet found a soul who was faithful in honouring St. Joseph, who did not make great and rapid progress in perfection. For many years I have asked him on the day of his feast for a special grace, and he has never refused me; I have even remarked that if the grace I asked were not profitable to my soul, this loving saint would so order things that they would turn to my greater good. If any doubt my word, I entreat them to try for themselves. They will soon learn from their own experience how advantageous it is to be devout to this glorious Patriarch. What I say applies especially to interior souls, that

should cling with all their hearts to this great master of the interior life. As for myself I cannot understand how any one who loves the Queen of Angels can refuse love and devotion to her chaste Spouse, on account of the help he gave both to herself and her divine Son."

CHAPTER IV.

ST. JOSEPH THE PATRON OF HUSBANDS AND
FATHERS.

If we look around for a model of a Christian family, where shall we go excepting to Nazareth, where Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, the Son of God, the Mother of God, and the chaste Spouse of the Mother of God, form the Holy Family which is to serve as a model to the fathers, mothers, and children of future ages? And it must necessarily be so. Jesus, the Son of God, the source of all good, must sanctify and make perfect all those who approach Him; and therefore Mary His loving Mother, and Joseph his devoted father, must be models of sanctity and perfection.

Let us respectfully draw near to this Holy House, over which the angels watched with love and veneration, this sanctuary where the human race is regenerated, whence flow ineffable graces,

unknown even to Adam in his primitive innocence. Let us approach with profound respect, for this family which we are contemplating is the family of the Son of God. Let us approach with love, for the great dignity of the august members of this family is accompanied with the most tender charity. Let us approach, animated by a holy zeal; for Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, are models which we should endeavour to imitate. Let us then take St. Joseph as our model; and consider, first, the example he gives to husbands and fathers. Joseph always preserved intact the beautiful flower of his virginity. He kept his heart pure and perfectly free from all attachment to creatures, ready to give his love and his care to the Spouse whom God would point out to him, or to remain single and solitary all his life, according to God's good pleasure. And what reward did he obtain for this virginity he so carefully preserved? He was chosen by God to be the Spouse of Mary, the most perfect of creatures. Oh, if men would imitate the conduct of this glorious patriarch, what miseries would they be

spared; how different would the world become! If, instead of throwing away their affections upon unworthy objects, they would wait and pray, and endeavour to discover the will of God as to their future state, we should not see so many unworthy families, we should not have to lament so many unhappy unions.

Joseph is also the model of heads of families. He does not refuse to exercise the authority which God Himself has given him over Jesus and Mary; on the contrary, the holy Gospels show him to us as directing the actions of our Blessed Lady. Mary herself, when speaking of him, is careful to give him the first place, as being due to him as head of the Holy Family. "Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing," she says to Jesus, when she finds Him in the temple. St. Luke, following her example, also gives him the precedence. When speaking of the prophecy of Simeon, he says: "His father and mother were wondering at these things that were spoken concerning him." The angels even acknowledge the authority of Joseph. They address themselves to him

when there is question of removing the Holy Child to a place of safety. "Arise," they say, "take the Child and His Mother, and fly into Egypt." And again: "Take the Child and His Mother, and return into the land of Judea." It belongs to St. Joseph to rouse Jesus and Mary in the middle of the night, and to command them, in the name of God, to set out instantly. But who could imagine the sweetness and the respect with which St. Joseph lays his commands upon Jesus and Mary? The holy Gospels have not opened to us the secrets of that divine household; but we recommend all who are in authority to apply to St. Joseph, he will infuse into their hearts the spirit of loving gentleness which made the superiority over Jesus and Mary a masterpiece of God's power and mercy.

Very few saints are to be found in the married state. Those who marry must necessarily have their hearts divided, and in consequence it is difficult for them to give to God the perfect love which He deserves. But if the Christian husband will but turn to Joseph, he

will find in him a model, and a most powerful protector. What is, in fact, St. Joseph's greatest glory, what are the titles which we give him when we wish most to honour him? "Spouse of Mary," "Father of Jesus." Therefore is he, in an especial manner, the patron of Christian marriage. For the same reasons fathers will find in St. Joseph a model and a guide in their conduct to their children: There is oftentimes a great deal of selfishness in the love of parents for their children; their affection is too human, although in many cases they are not aware of it themselves. This selfishness is often shown if the children are privileged enough to receive a religious vocation. What opposition in such a case, what tears, what lamentations! These clearly prove that they are strongly influenced by temporal considerations.

But how different is St. Joseph's conduct. How admirable is his silence as regards the dignity he holds. He knows that the Child he holds in his arms is the Son of God, the Messiah whom the Jews are expecting. By informing the Jews of the

miraculous conception of Jesus, he might have drawn honour and esteem to himself. But no, St. Joseph was unselfish; he knew that Jesus wished to remain in humble obscurity, and no thought of self-aggrandisement could induce him to impede the designs of God. What trouble, what fatigue, what suffering does not St. Joseph undergo, in order to provide for the wants of his Infant God! Jesus never comes without the cross, and how heavily this cross weighs upon His foster-father! Before His birth, He causes him the most cruel perplexity. When He is born, it is in such poverty that St. Joseph is unable to afford Him any comfort. At His presentation in the temple, Simeon prophesies sorrow and suffering. Soon after, He has to fly in haste into Egypt; and St. Joseph has to support Him by his labour in a foreign land. Then, suddenly he has to return into Judea, in the midst of fear and anxiety lest His enemies should discover their retreat. But the love of Joseph is equal to every emergency. He never thinks of himself; he never grudges his trouble or his life; he is happy to be



allowed to suffer for his son and his God. What a lesson to those fathers who will not deny themselves in any way for the good of their children.

The only knowledge which we have of the Infancy of Jesus is founded on these words of the Evangelists, "*He was subject to them ;*" and they show us that Joseph exercised authority over Jesus, for where there is no command there can be no submission. This is certainly St. Joseph's greatest glory, the most brilliant gem in his crown, that he was chosen to take the place of God the Father towards His Only-Begotten Son. Our Divine Lord, the Eternal Wisdom of the Father, learnt the Will of God through Joseph, and obeyed it implicitly. In Joseph He saw the image of His Father, He revered him as exercising over Him a power given him from on high, and He constantly rendered him the homage of a docile and loving obedience. But what graces must not our glorious saint have received to enable him to fulfil worthily such great functions! How could he be capable of directing the Son of God in the paths of

wisdom, and how could he preserve himself from pride when receiving the respectful homage of God Himself? Surely, the Eternal Father must have dwelt in a very special and mysterious manner in his soul; and surely he must, more than any other saint, have enjoyed the fulness of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

It is here, then, into this chosen soul, the sanctuary of the adorable Trinity, that fathers of families should endeavour to penetrate as much as possible, in order to obtain some share of the paternal spirit which should animate them. In Joseph they will find prudence, tenderness, unselfishness, and all the virtues which are necessary in order to enable them to bring up their children as they should for God. The vocation of Christian fathers is very similar to that of St. Joseph. They have to endeavour to form Jesus Christ in their children, to cause them to advance as Jesus did "in age and wisdom before God and man;" and in order to fulfil their mission, they will require the powerful aid and protection of the father of Jesus. He teaches married people how to practise the

virtues of their state ; and he will also teach fathers how to educate their children, by placing before them the Child Jesus, the model they should strive to reproduce in those they have the care of. We therefore repeat to husbands and fathers the words of Pharaoh to his people. We say to them : In the midst of the famine and distress in which you find yourselves, however deficient you may be in grace and virtue, "*Go to Joseph,*" he will give you what you want, and with his loving help, you will be enabled to fulfil your duties towards your wife and your children.

CHAPTER V.

ST. JOSEPH IS THE PATRON OF VIRGINS
AND PRIESTS.

It is a pious custom to represent St. Joseph holding a branch of lilies in his hand, to represent the admirable purity of soul and body in which this glorious saint excels all others. We shall find this prerogative foreshown in the person of the first Joseph, the son of Isaac and Jacob. Joseph possessed, without doubt, all virtues, but his chastity is especially mentioned, in order to render him a more perfect type of his illustrious successor. All the doctors and fathers of the Church affirm that St. Joseph preserved his virginity intact unto death. But when we try to realize in what degree the father of Jesus practised this queen of virtues, we are at a loss for words to express our thoughts. What virtue must not he have

possessed, who passed his life with Jesus and Mary, and who was loved by them !

Many great doctors assert that St. Joseph was purified from original sin in his mother's womb. When we consider that he was chosen to act as father to Jesus, it seems almost impossible to doubt that he must have received some great and special grace of purity. We know that Jeremias was sanctified in his mother's womb, and that St. John the Baptist was, according to belief, purified from original sin, when his mother was visited by the Blessed Virgin. Would God refuse to His father a favour which He granted to His servants ? How carefully St. Joseph must have watched over this precious treasure of innocence which was vouchsafed him. In his infancy and his youth, how jealously he guarded his thoughts, his words, his actions, in order not to sully his spotless innocence. But when he was united to the Virgin of virgins, to the Immaculate Mary, how immensely his purity must have increased. Do we not find that those who are devout to the Queen of Virgins seem to acquire a certain delicate purity which

other souls do not possess? What, then, would Joseph obtain from his spouse? Jesus Christ also helped, by His chaste and loving caresses, to perfect this virtue in the soul of His foster-father. St. Joseph spent so many years in the closest intimacy with Purity itself; he never left Jesus either at Bethlehem, or Egypt, or Nazareth. Happier far than Simeon, who only received Him into his arms for a few moments, Joseph saw Him grow up under his eyes, he constantly nursed and caressed Him from His infancy upwards.

We find also that St. Joseph is a familiar companion of the angels, who seem attracted by his wonderful purity. We find them constantly appearing to him, comforting him in his troubles, guiding him in perplexities, and manifesting to him the designs of God. St. Joseph never appears to be at all troubled or frightened by these apparitions; he seems to be quite accustomed to the company of the heavenly spirits.

All these considerations naturally point to St. Joseph as the patron of all who have vowed their chastity to God. No doubt

he favours in an especial manner those chosen souls, who, bound by the ties of marriage, live like himself in fraternal union, preserving intact their chastity. There are many instances of this in the lives of the saints, and we may believe that St. Joseph, by his intercession and patronage, obtained for them the necessary graces. These are, however, exceptional cases, and St. Joseph does not limit his protection to them. St. Joseph loves all virgins; all those who, after his example, offer themselves to God, and preserve their virginity entire for love of Him. No matter what their age, their sex, or their rank of life may be, let them apply with confidence to the virginal spouse of the virgin mother, and they will, without fail, experience the benefit of his intercession.

But those who most closely resemble St. Joseph, those who may be considered in an especial manner as his own chosen children, are priests, because they enter into a closer union with Jesus than the rest of the faithful; because, like St. Joseph himself, they bear Jesus in their hands, touch Him and watch over Him, so to speak, in

the sacrament of His love. A priest who is devout to our Blessed Lady finds in her more than the rest of the faithful, and to him she is not merely a queen, a mother, watching over her child, she is as a companion, a loving friend, who cheers him in his solitude; consoles him in trouble, and who, by her prayers, obtains fruit for his labours and watchings.

Let priests, then, apply to St. Joseph to learn what love and respect they should pay to Mary, who has so special a care of them; let them beg of him to give them the humility, the respect, the love, the devotion which he felt towards his chaste spouse, and so to guide them by his prayers, that their homage may be in some measure worthy of so great a queen. Let the priest also learn from St. Joseph with what loving reverence he should handle the Sacred Body of Jesus in the holy Sacrifice of the Mass. How pure should he not be, to touch Him before Whom the angels tremble; how recollected, how humble, how full of love for a God Who places Himself in his hands through love. How then can a priest venture to stand

day after day at that holy altar, feeling, as he must do, how wanting he is in these virtues, how utterly unfit for the great duty he has to perform? But let him take courage, let him "go to Joseph," he will compassionate his weakness, enlighten his mind, and obtain for him the graces he deserves. How often has not St. Joseph, like the priest, lifted up the Sacred Body of our Lord and laid Him down again, how often has he not leaned over Him, clasped Him to his bosom, and enjoyed the ineffable delights of the closest union? He will not refuse to give to a poor humble priest, who honours him and invokes his intercession, some spark of the humble, respectful, and yet most tender love with which he performed these duties. The Church herself urges priests to apply to St. Joseph; she offers them two admirable prayers to the holy patriarch, to be recited before celebrating the Divine Mysteries, and to animate their devotion, she enriches them with indulgences.

The pious founder of St. Sulpice, M. Olier, speaks beautifully on this subject. "Priests," he says, "should choose the

great St. Joseph as their model, in the direction of those souls which they bring forth to God. St. Joseph conducted and directed the Child Jesus by the Spirit of His Eternal Father, in prudence, wisdom, and sweetness, and thus we should treat all the members of Jesus Christ who are confided to our care, treating them with as much reverence as St. Joseph treated the Holy Child."

CHAPTER VI.

ST. JOSEPH THE PATRON OF THOSE WHO
LABOUR.

When Adam committed that sin which had such fatal effects on his posterity, God pronounced this sentence against him : "Because thou hast hearkened to the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat, cursed is the earth in thy work ; with labour and toil shalt thou eat thereof all the days of thy life. Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee : thou shalt eat the herbs of the earth. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return to the earth out of which thou wast taken." This severe chastisement was not reserved for him alone, it was extended to all generations, even till the end of time. All must bear some portion of the law. In fact, we see the immense majority of those around us employ-

ed in some way in manual labour; only a few are exempt, and they are now reaping the fruits of the labour of their ancestors. Many begin to work almost from their infancy, and continue it even in their old age. It happens often that this labour not only weighs down the body, but seems almost to degrade the soul of those who are called to it.

Not understanding the value of the vocation which God has given him, the labourer often rebels against his position. Comparing his lot with that of the rich and powerful, he becomes envious of their prosperity; he accuses God of injustice, and allows hatred and impiety to gain possession of his heart. He then almost ceases to be a man, he becomes like a beast, or a machine; his intelligence becomes dull, and his will is a slave to the instincts of his passions. Labourers will find a remedy for these evils, and also a powerful support and assistance, in devotion to St. Joseph. If they will call upon him, he will at once enlighten their minds and soothe their pains by his sweet and loving consolations.

We thus see that working men do not sufficiently value their vocation, and that, in consequence of this blindness, they allow envy and ambition to take possession of their souls. But let them go to St. Joseph, and learn from him the dignity and nobleness of a life of patient constant labour.

St. Joseph was not a criminal abandoned by God, and condemned to labour as a punishment for his sins. No, he was the *just* man, and by *just* is here meant that universal justice mentioned by St. Paul, when he says; "the just man lives by faith;" it is that justice which harmonises all the faculties of man, and which, according to St. Thomas, consists in the union of all virtues. And yet this *just* man, this beloved friend of God, is poor, and his poverty was the more painful as he was by right the heir of the glorious throne of David and Solomon. Do we not see at once that if men despise poverty, God at least esteems it: since He leaves the greatest of saints, the glorious patriarch Joseph, in poverty?

God the Father, when He sent His only begotten Son upon earth, chose an earthly

father for Him, to watch over and protect Him. He likewise chose a spouse for His mother, to guard her from the calumnies and insults of the Jews. Who will God fix upon to fulfil these great and sublime functions? Will a rich man or a poor one be the object of so great an honour? Rejoice, O ye poor; take courage, ye labourers; the man chosen by God to be the father of Jesus, the spouse of Mary, is a poor labouring man like yourselves. Take, then, St. Joseph for your model and your patron. Why should you envy the rich? They are not as rich as you in dignity or grace. They should rather envy you, who have been honoured by the favour of God, of Jesus, and of Mary. Leave to the rich ones of this world their honours and their treasures, which will soon vanish, and keep for yourselves this inestimable treasure of poverty, which you see so magnificently honoured in St. Joseph. St. Joseph offers you a noble example of conscientious labour, not working for the love of gain, not striving to acquire money by any dishonest means; and if you keep your eyes fixed upon the greatness of his recompense, you

will have no difficulty in following his example.

St. Joseph will also teach you how to sanctify your labour, and how to avoid that degradation of soul which must inevitably follow from the forgetfulness of that supernatural principle which should animate your work. St. Joseph was most certainly an industrious worker, gaining his bread by the sweat of his brow, not allowing a moment to be wasted in idleness or dissipation; but still what pious thoughts, what constant aspirations ennobled his work! Certainly, when a new day of labour and fatigue dawned for St. Joseph, when he rose early in order to make those carts and ploughs, which St. Justin tells us he used to fabricate, his first thoughts would be for Jesus and Mary; a loving greeting exchanged with them, a morning salutation full of respectful tenderness, would strengthen and encourage him for the day. He was going to work for Jesus and Mary, they took an interest in his labour, and this was enough to prevent his feeling any weariness, and to enable him to persevere in his humble task. The labourer should,

likewise, when first he wakes, raise his thoughts to Jesus and Mary. During his work his mind will be absorbed in his occupation. He will have many temptations to impatience, to anger, to discouragement, during the day; at least, let him take advantage of the first moments, when his mind is free, to recommend himself to Jesus and Mary, to offer his actions to God, for, without His help, we can do nothing towards our sanctification. Let him make a firm resolution to work, not for himself only, not merely for his wife and children; but, above all, let him work like St. Joseph, for Jesus and Mary, to fulfil their will and to increase their glory.

But we may believe that St. Joseph did not content himself with this morning salutation to his spouse and Son. Where the treasure is, there the heart is also; all the thoughts and aspirations of the mind turn to the objects of love. Therefore, often during his work, St. Joseph would turn to Jesus and Mary; he did not lose any time through it, it was only a rapid glance, and then he would labour with fresh ardour. Surely, Jesus and Mary could not leave

these loving aspirations unanswered or unrewarded. They have honoured, by their divine visits, sometimes, even sinners, who have offended and forgotten them. What, then, would they not do for St. Joseph? How many times has not a tender caress from Jesus, or a loving smile from Mary, inundated his soul with ineffable sweetness? Oh, happy Joseph, who, by your labours and fatigue, deserved so rich a recompense! And why should not the tradesman, or the labourer, imitate this example? It is true, time presses; the masters are exacting, and will not allow a spare moment. But an aspiration of the heart cannot hinder work. Those "arrows of the soul," as the saints call ejaculatory prayers, pierce the clouds, and reach the throne of God, before even the devil has time to perceive them. They would strengthen and encourage the workman in his toil, and Jesus and Mary would not be slow to repay with fresh graces each new mark of love. They would sweeten, by their assistance, the hours of toil, refresh the weary, urge on the slothful, and the work would, under their aus-

pices, succeed better, even in a temporary point of view. But work does not last for ever. No matter how long the day, evening will come at last, and the members of the poor family will be united at a common repast. Oh, then it was that St. Joseph was filled to overflowing with happiness, when, seated between Jesus and Mary, he could give full scope to his love and devotion. Who can penetrate into the secrets of those evenings when Jesus and Mary vied with each other in testifying their gratitude and love to their guardian and protector? Each week, also, on the Sabbath day, St. Joseph had a day of rest and peace, during which he could enjoy delights which no other saint has ever obtained. He never lost a moment of these days, all were spent in the company of Jesus and Mary.

The Catholic workman can act like St. Joseph. Why should not his Sundays and feast days be spent in the company of Jesus and Mary, by the exact fulfilment of his religious duties, and then in the company of his wife and children, with whom he may enjoy some innocent amusement?

Nay, the Catholic labourer may obtain even more than St. Joseph could. He can, after having cleansed and purified his soul in the tribunal of penance, approach the altar, and receive within his heart that God whom St. Joseph nursed and caressed when on earth. It is thus, that union with Jesus and Mary will sweeten the labour of all who have to earn their living. It is thus, that, like St. Joseph, they may enjoy a happy and peaceful life, no matter how painful and degrading their work may be; and then, when they die, they will obtain in heaven a reward far exceeding all they can imagine, a reward, not only for their virtues and merits, but for that poverty which they have suffered so patiently and humbly in this life.

CHAPTER VII.

ST. JOSEPH THE PATRON OF INTERIOR SOULS.

God is always knocking at the door of our hearts ; always seeking, by His inspirations and favours, to draw us to Himself. He visits us frequently during our prayers, or whilst assisting at the holy Mass ; or even whilst employed in our ordinary occupations, when they have been undertaken for love of Him. But souls that open their hearts to these whisperings of the Holy Spirit are not content with these short moments of intercourse with God ; they choose a time, when, apart from the world, and free from cares, they may open their hearts to the influence of the Holy Ghost, and commune in prayer with the Beloved of their souls.

Prayer ! O what a powerful arm this is with which to defeat the wiles of Satan ; what nourishing food with which to strengthen our souls ! What a consolation

and rest in our troubles! The saints and holy doctors of the Church have vied with each other in extolling this practice. Some tell us, that, without meditation, we cannot, save by a miracle, lead a truly virtuous life; others, that those who meditate shall be saved, and those who do not shall certainly be lost. How necessary, then, it is for us to embrace generously, and persevere faithfully, in the holy practice of mental prayer. But we shall find many difficulties in this practice; illusions and temptations beset it on all sides. Presumption and discouragement are two abysses into which souls constantly fall. The devil is always busy tormenting all who walk by this road; he will leave no stratagem untried in order to frighten beginners. What, then, shall we do? Where shall we find a guide prudent enough to lead us safely through all illusions?—powerful enough to protect us from the rage of Satan? O, let us turn to St. Joseph; let us choose him for our guide and director, and we may rest assured that we shall swiftly and securely advance in this difficult and stony path. In order to

animate those souls who have given themselves to prayer, with great confidence in this glorious saint, we will choose one amongst the many reasons we might adduce to prove that St. Joseph must supereminently possess the gift of leading souls to prayer.

St. Joseph received from God the mission of guiding and directing the Son of God upon earth. In order worthily to fulfil this mission, he must have received all the light necessary to know the Will of God concerning Jesus, and he must have had such prudence and discernment as never to give an imperfect or erroneous command. For, although Jesus Christ, being the Eternal Wisdom, could have instantly rectified any imperfection that there might be in the order He received, still we cannot believe that God would allow any such a disorder to occur in the holy house of Nazareth, the abode of peace and subordination. But whence did St. Joseph draw the light and grace which illuminated him, and enabled him to guide the Son of God securely? Surely, not from human sources. Human wisdom and

human prudence would not suffice for the direction and education of the Saviour of mankind. We find that human wisdom is not even sufficient to guide souls that are raised to any special degree of sanctity. The director of interior souls must possess sanctity, in order to fulfil his task efficiently. He must be himself a man of prayer, and must draw directly from God the lights which he cannot find in theology or study. St. Joseph, therefore, who had to direct the Holy One of God, must necessarily have been a man of prayer; he must have had intimate and constant communications with God Himself, and received from Him the counsels and commands which he imparted to Jesus.

We know that when Moses was appointed guide and ruler over the people of Israel, he conversed for forty days face to face with Almighty God, and received directly from Him all the laws and commandments which he afterwards transmitted to the Jews. But what comparison could be made between the Jews and the Divine Person of the Incarnate Word? Certainly, God the Father must have spoken "face to face"

with St. Joseph, and instructed him in all that appertained to the guidance of His Only-Begotten Son; and as it is by mental prayer that God communicates Himself to souls, St. Joseph must be instructed in all the secrets of this holy exercise. It was here that he found light in his difficulties, guidance in perplexity, and consolation in trouble. It was here that God the Father manifested to him His Will concerning the Holy Family. The secrets of the direction of Jesus Christ by St. Joseph have not been revealed to us: we may be sure that if the holy writers had left us an account of it, we should have found these words constantly repeated, as they are in the Books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers: "*Locutusque est Dominus ad Joseph dicens.*" "And the Lord spoke to Joseph, saying."

The entire life of St. Joseph bespeaks a man of prayer. From his birth until his death, St. Joseph lived in humility and poverty, forgotten and ignored by men; spending his time in silence and recollection, in the complete absence of all human satisfactions or pleasures, finding, in his

his prudent care. Does he not know exactly the point to which God wishes us to tend? Can he not discover all the snares of the enemy, all his deceits and stratagems? Does he not know what arms are most efficacious to break his power and render his fury useless? St. Joseph will know how to help us, for he is wise; he will be able to help us, for he is powerful; he will be willing to help us, for he is good.

Let us hear what that great saint, that admirable contemplative, St. Teresa, says upon this point. "Interior souls," says the seraphical virgin, "should be exceedingly attached to St. Joseph; and those who have no director to instruct them in the secrets of mental prayer, should take him for their director, if they wish not to go astray." These words are more convincing than the most learned reasonings, when we consider the authority of the one who speaks, and the assurance with which they are uttered.

St. Teresa practised what she preached. She placed all the reformed houses which she founded in Spain under the protection

of the glorious St. Joseph. It was under his especial care that her children were to exercise themselves in all the holy practices of their rule, above all, in the practice of mental prayer. We may judge of the effects of his protection by reading the lives of the first-sister and mothers of Carmel, which are enough of themselves to prove how efficacious was the assistance of this great saint. We have, also, the words of St. Teresa herself, who thus speaks in her "Book of Foundations:" "The graces which our Lord has bestowed upon these houses are very great. There is scarcely one religious in a house who is led by the way of ordinary meditation, they are almost all raised to contemplation, and some are favoured with extasies and raptures. Our Lord gives to others graces of a different kind; He communicates with them by visions and revelations which are evidently of divine origin. There are two or three of these favoured souls in each monastery."

Is St. Joseph less powerful now than he was three hundred years ago? Oh no, his credit with God has certainly not

diminished. On the contrary, he displays his power and his goodness far more now than formerly ; he will continue to do so, since his very name signifies increase, augmentation. Let us, then, confide in him, and he will lead us into that interior castle, the secrets of which are disclosed to us by his favoured client, St. Teresa, and thus we shall find our souls enlightened by the purest rays, and inflamed by the most ardent love.

CHAPTER VIII.

ST. JOSEPH IS THE PATRON OF HUMBLE SOULS.

To the gift of the sublimest prayer, St. Joseph united that still more precious grace, a profound humility. This is evident at first sight, by what we know of his history, as related by the Evangelists. The humility of St. Joseph was shown by his whole demeanour, by all his actions. We need only fix our attention for a moment on his calm and placid figure, to feel sure that he is truly "meek and humble of heart," a faithful copy of Jesus Christ. We need not enter into any details to prove this; St. Joseph is like a modest violet, hidden in the shade, discovered only by its sweet perfume. But if it be necessary to bring forth some fact to prove the gentle humility of our glorious saint, we need only turn to the Gospel, and at once we shall find abundant proofs of our assertion.

In the first place, the Gospel tells us that

St. Joseph was the spouse of Mary, the most humble of creatures, she who styles herself the handmaid of the Lord, and who was chosen by God to be His Mother, on account of her humility: "He hath regarded the lowliness of His handmaid." She who was humble and submissive to all creatures must have been especially so to St. Joseph, her lord and spouse. Oh, what a lesson it is to us, puffed up as we are with pride and insubordination, to see Mary, the Queen of Heaven and earth, bowing respectfully before the blessed patriarch, who is amazed at her extraordinary humility. Who can describe or imagine the humility, the modesty, the submission with which Mary would seek to know his will, and ask his permission, before undertaking anything? And could St. Joseph, with such an example before him, fail to increase in humility every day? Even if he had been rebellious and proud, like others of his race, he must have been conquered at last by such an example of sweetness and submission. But St. Joseph's heart was docile, mild, and easily led by grace. Never, not even in St. John

the Evangelist, did Mary find a more fervent and faithful disciple. Let us reflect for a few moments upon this, and we shall be able to realize, in a very small degree, the profound humility of the spouse of Mary.

But St. Joseph had another and still more powerful help to humility, in the fact that he was the father of Jesus. We know by faith, for we find it in the Gospels, that Jesus was subject to St. Joseph. He was subject to him, not merely, when, as at Bethlehem, He veiled His Godhead under the form of an infant; not merely, when, as a boy, He increased in age and wisdom: but even after He had attained the age of manhood. For nearly thirty years St. Joseph had before him, daily, the example of a God, submissive and obedient to the will of a poor carpenter.

Let us pause here a moment to meditate on this great and astounding miracle, so well calculated to confound our pride and conceit. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, chose for His superior a poor labouring man. By an incomprehensible act of humility He obeyed his least sign; He



followed his advice; He carried out his commands without delay, without resistance, without weariness, day after day, for years. Could St. Joseph witness this miracle, contemplate this sight, constantly, for thirty years, without feeling in the bottom of his soul the most sincere and the most perfect humility? The examples which St. Joseph had constantly before his eyes must have also preserved him from the more subtle danger of vain glory, which attacks even our virtues, and tries to draw pride even from humility. But how could St. Joseph for a moment feel tempted to think his virtue anything, his humility worthy of the name, when he compared them with the virtues and the humility of Jesus and Mary?

Let us, then, apply to St. Joseph, and beg of him to obtain for us his clients, the inestimable favour of a true and sincere humility, of a straightforward simple humility, a humility which will cause us to submit to all *without exception*, to believe ourselves inferior to all. Some may fancy that this humility is only attainable by some few privileged souls, who have

arrived at a high degree of sanctity; but if they read the Epistles of St. Paul, they will be obliged to confess it is not so. The Epistle to the Ephesians, for instance, is not addressed to any pious association, any community of holy persons bound by vow to aim at perfection. Ephesus was a large city, filled with a proud voluptuous people, and subject to all the vices common to great towns. But the Apostle, in this Epistle, speaks thus: "*Subjecti invicem in timore Christi.*" "Be subject one to the other, in the fear of the Lord." Be subject one to another without distinction, without exception. He speaks still more clearly in his Epistle to the Philippians: "*In humilitate, superiores sibi invicem arbitrantes.*" "In humility let each esteem others better than themselves." That is to say, that each of the faithful should humbly and respectfully submit to his brethren.

Amongst true Christians there are constant conflicts as to who shall obey, as amongst worldlings there are perpetual disputes as to who shall command. No doubt these amiable disputes, so pleasing

to God, must often have occurred at Nazareth. Many times, Joseph, forgetful of his authority, would seek to know the will of his Son or his spouse, and many times they would be obliged to remind him that he was, by God's appointment, the head of the Holy Family.

But how may we hope to obtain this spirit of humble submission, not merely towards our superiors, but even towards our equals or inferiors? By imitating St. Joseph's example, by seeing Christ in all those with whom we have to deal. This is not a vain imagination, a mere pious fancy. Jesus Christ certainly resides in all faithful hearts. If, therefore, we think of Jesus Christ residing in our brethren, if we keep constantly before our eyes our own imperfections, miseries, and ingratitude, we shall not find it hard to follow the counsel of the Apostle, and to think *all better than ourselves*. Let us, then, see God, not merely in our superiors, but in our equals, in those over whom we may have authority; and then, even when exercising this authority, we shall have real sentiments of humility in our

hearts. But when we find this practice difficult, when human feelings and human pride make their power felt, then let us turn to St. Joseph, let us remind him of the days when he had authority over Jesus and Mary; and when he united the most profound humility with the most exalted dignity.

We also find, from the holy Gospels, that St. Joseph possessed the virtue of holy silence in a marvellous degree. The Gospels contain words spoken by our Lord, by our Lady, by the Apostles, by St. John the Baptist, by the Jews, by Pilate, and many others; but we do not find a word, not a single word, spoken by St. Joseph. During that time of agonizing doubt and uncertainty, which followed upon the Incarnation, could not St. Joseph have relieved his anxiety by questioning our Lady, and trying to ascertain the truth? When the angel appeared to him and calmed his fears, must he not have had a thousand questions to ask, a thousand doubts to be decided? When Simeon prophesied in the temple the sorrows of Mary, would not St. Joseph naturally have de-

sired some further explanations on that point? When the angel appeared to him twice, to tell him to fly into Egypt, and to return to Judea, must not St. Joseph have wished for some advice concerning his journey; some enlightenment as to the length of his stay in Egypt; what means of support he would find there; what road he should take, &c.? And when the Child Jesus, in His twelfth year, remained in Jerusalem, should we not naturally expect to find St. Joseph inquiring the reasons of His conduct, and expressing his joy at finding Him again? But no; in all these most trying and most exciting circumstances, St. Joseph preserves a tranquil silence; at least, we may so suppose from the holy Gospels, which often mention words spoken by others. There is something still more marvellous in the silence of this holy patriarch, if we consider the greatness of the mysteries which, for so long, he kept hidden in impenetrable silence. St. Joseph knew that Jesus was the Messiah so long expected by the Jews. He knew that Mary was the spotless Virgin foretold by Isaias, but ignored and de-

spised by those around her. What an immense temptation for one less humble, less unselfish, to publish everywhere these sublime secrets. What a temptation to put himself forward as the spouse of a virgin who had miraculously conceived; as the foster-father of the Messiah. What a chance of raising himself above his present position, and acquiring, in the eyes of the Jews, the honours which should belong to the head of this family.

St. Joseph, however, does not say a word, he never gives even the slightest cause for any to suspect so great a secret; and he maintains this silence, not for a day, or a month, or a year, but for thirty years, in the midst of poverty, trial, and persecution, without ever trying to lessen his sufferings by betraying the precious trust which has been confided to him by God. He keeps it so perfectly, that even at the approach of death, he does not open his lips. He dies as he lived, in humble obscurity, so that his very name is used as a reproach to Jesus when the Jews would say: "Is not this the Son of Joseph the carpenter?"

Habitual silence may be considered as a proof of true humility. A proud man will seldom be a silent one. He will think it a duty to allow others to profit by his talents or learning. He will always be endeavouring to advise, instruct, or correct, all with whom he has to deal. Silence is a virtue of humble souls, souls who are ready to learn, willing to be taught, and to receive from others that guidance and assistance which they think themselves in need of. We may, then, truly consider the silence of St. Joseph as a most convincing proof of his humility. And our admiration for this glorious saint will be heightened when we call to mind all the wonderful privileges and graces conferred upon him, the heavenly wisdom with which he was enlightened, the knowledge and prudence that were concealed under that simple exterior, in order to render him a fit guardian for the Eternal Word.

Oh, how different is the conduct of men! Even spiritual men take a pleasure in displaying their virtues, their knowledge of divine things, sometimes even the graces and favours they have received

from God. Under the specious pretext of being useful to their neighbour, they seek their own exaltation, the petty gratification of their vain-glory. And what are the results of this foolish pride? Do we not constantly see it around us? Do we not see many, on account of this self-seeking, this secret desire of esteem, abandoned by God? They who appeared as masters of Israel, who undertook to teach and guide others, lose their own souls, and find that in gaining the applause of men, they have lost the favour of God. St. Joseph kept the graces and favours vouchsafed him by God hidden in his heart, and therefore Jesus remained with him for thirty years, constantly enriching him with new gifts and privileges. Let us learn from him to value this great virtue of silence, this virtue which he loved so much and practised so perfectly. Let us beg of him to destroy all pride and self-seeking in our hearts, to fill us with sentiments of self-abasement, of true and real humility.

This Christian humility is indeed a great, a wonderful mystery to men. How marvellous it appears to us, when we see

men who possess great and noble talents, men who can lead millions of their fellow-creatures by their influence and power, men who are surrounded by admiring multitudes, who have received from God the gift of working stupendous miracles, practising the most profound humility, considering themselves as unworthy to tread the earth, as the greatest of sinners, as the vilest of creatures. And yet this is what we find in the lives of the saints. What a difference there is between our sentiments and those of the saints! What an immense abyss between our pride and their humility! How shall we ever succeed in transforming ourselves into even a distant resemblance of these true servants of God? Let us not despair; let us turn in our trouble to St. Joseph, the most humble of saints; he learnt his humility from Jesus Himself, and he was not puffed up by the unequalled privileges which he possessed. He will teach us to preserve in grateful silence the remembrance of the graces we have received from God; to be content to live forgotten and unknown by men, if such be God's will; to command without

pride or haughtiness, to see always Jesus in our brethren, and to despise as nothing the little acts of self-abasement which we may perform, in comparison with the humiliations of Jesus and Mary.

CHAPTER IX.

ST. JOSEPH THE PATRON OF THE DYING.

Oh, how happy at the hour of death is that soul, which in life has endeavoured to walk in the path of virtue, under the protection and guidance of the glorious St. Joseph! We cannot even form to ourselves a worthy picture of the death of this happy saint; a death incomparably sweeter than that of any other saint, owing to the actual presence and loving assistance of Jesus and Mary. The Venerable Sister Mary of Agreda, in her life of the Blessed Virgin, relates how, for some years before his death, St. Joseph suffered from cruel illnesses, which forced him to suspend his labour. This was the last, and, as it were, the crowning gift bestowed upon him. For God always sends afflictions to those He loves, and therefore He rewarded St. Joseph, by the grace of patient suffering, for the many services that

he had rendered to Jesus during twenty-seven years.

But in the midst of his pains the soul of the glorious Patriarch was replenished with consolation. For, had he not Jesus and Mary to comfort him? They both tended him with the most loving care; they lavished on him marks of affectionate gratitude, and devoted themselves to relieving his sufferings, and strengthening his soul. We may indeed safely believe, with the holy Mary of Agreda, that Jesus more than once would miraculously ease His foster-father, by commanding the pains to leave him for a time.

Those souls who take St. Joseph for their patron and protector, must not, however, expect to escape from the pains and sorrows which usually precede death. St. Joseph knows too well the value of suffering to deprive those he loves of it. He does not wish to lead his clients to heaven, excepting by the road of the cross, the road which our Lord trod first, and in which all the faithful must follow Him. But if St. Joseph sometimes afflicts those who love him, he knows how to turn these

afflictions to the good of their souls. He is always near, in order to strengthen his children, to soothe and encourage them; he tempers the suffering to the amount of endurance which he sees them capable of. He acts secretly on their hearts, and obtains for them from Jesus and Mary choice and efficacious graces, such as he only can obtain.

The time then came at last, when, in the designs of Providence, it was fitting that St. Joseph should leave the tranquil House at Nazareth, where for so long he had enjoyed the company of Jesus and Mary. O what a beautiful peace then filled the soul of this faithful and prudent servant; all his life had been spent in the service of God, and in forgetfulness of self, and now the time was come when God would say to him: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy Lord." But was there not some bitterness, some sorrow, mixed with the peaceful joy of the spouse of Mary? Death to him was not what it is to us. When we die we go to meet Jesus, the "Desired of Nations," and Mary, the "Cause of our

joy." But St. Joseph, when he died, had to leave all that was dear to him ; he had to lose the company of Jesus and Mary ; he would miss their heavenly smiles, their loving caresses ; surely he must have been grieved to be separated from them, even for a time. But we must remember that St. Joseph's love was a *perfect* love ; it was utterly devoid of all selfishness : he had that single eye, that perfect simplicity, which our Lord praises in the Gospel ; that simple heart, which never looks back upon self ; he went always straight on, like the mysterious animals seen by the Prophet Ezechiel. God called him to enjoy, in the bosom of Abraham, that commencement of felicity which was afterwards to be crowned in heaven. It was God's will ; that was enough for St. Joseph. He was filled with the spirit of Jesus Christ, Who did "always what was pleasing to His Father;" and so he was ready to go, without even a sigh of regret for the peaceful home he was leaving.

But if St. Joseph had needed consolation, surely Jesus and Mary were able to afford it to him. Who can describe the sweet-

ness, the love, the sympathy with which they served him who had been such a faithful father, such a tender and virtuous spouse? We know that our Blessed Lady, "our life, our sweetness, and our hope," can infuse into hearts a joy and consolation which will heal all wounds and soothe all troubles. We know also that she has special power to assist us at the hour of death; and that is why each day we say so many times, "Pray for us now, and at the *hour of our death*." But who could compare the graces which she obtains for her servants and clients to the assistance she would render to St. Joseph, her beloved spouse and guardian? She had to reward him for all the help, all the assistance, he had given her during the thirty years he had spent with her. She had to repay him for all the love and devotion which he constantly manifested to her; she had to make up to him, as it were, all the trouble and anxiety which he had suffered for her. She owed her very life to him; for he had supported her, and provided her with the necessities of life. She owed to him, in a certain way, the privilege of being the Mother of

God ; for, as we have shown, she needed a protector to shield her from the suspicions and insults of the Jews. How liberally will she not repay these services, now that death is about to snatch her holy Spouse from her. We may believe she infused in his heart that ardent and vehement love of God, which inflamed her own soul, and caused her happy death. Mary of Agreda tells us expressly, that St. Joseph's death was caused more by the vehemence of his love than by any natural cause.

But what would Jesus, that model of filial piety and submission, that most loving and tender of sons, do in order to reward His foster-father for the tender and respectful care which he had lavished upon Him in His Infancy ? We cannot doubt that He would pillow on His sacred breast the head of that holy old man who had so often borne Him in his arms, nursed and caressed Him in His childhood. Yes, in that happy moment, St. Joseph's dying look would rest upon the beautiful face of his divine Son, beaming with love and gratitude towards him ; Jesus would, at that last moment, reveal to him, no doubt,

ineffable secrets which filled his soul with joy and peace. And when he was just about to expire, the Creator of the world, raising His right hand, would bless His foster-father with the sign of the cross which was so soon to save the world, and, with that last blessing, St. Joseph, freed from all, even the least stain, would breathe forth in peace his beautiful soul.

We cannot imagine, even for a moment, that the devils could be allowed to pollute that sacred death-bed by their presence; all was pure and holy at Nazareth, and nothing but peace and tranquillity were to be found there. The holy angels surrounded his poor couch; they formed luminous circles around him; they touched their golden harps and sang to him heavenly canticles. And when St. Joseph's soul quitted his body, they gathered around it, and conducted it, amidst hymns of joy and praise, to the peaceful rest of Limbo, where he was to be the bearer of happy tidings to the patriarchs and prophets.

O Joseph, we turn to thee; oh, by thy happy death, we pray thee to assist and protect us at the moment of our death.

Obtain for us a death like unto thine, peaceful and calm, in the arms of Jesus and Mary. Our hearts are filled with foolish and dangerous attachments, attachments to our relations, friends, and even to ourselves; prepare us now for that last moment, purify our souls, and raise them above all earthly affections, that when we hear the call of God, we may be able to fly to Him without regret or sadness. Give us some of those heavenly flames which Mary infused into thy heart; grant that before we die all fear may be expelled, that we may expire filled with love for God and desire to go to Him. Drive far from us the devils who seek to disturb and trouble us; they dared not approach thee. Thy name alone suffices to drive them away. Send down to us, O glorious saint, some of those blessed spirits who charmed thy last hours with their heavenly melodies. As father of the King of kings, and spouse of the Queen of Angels, thou hast great power over the celestial legions; we beg of thee to recompense the confidence we have in thee, by sending us these divine messengers to comfort and console us in

our pains, to strengthen us in our fears, and to smoothe the road that leads to heaven.

Above all, entreat thy loving spouse, our Mother Mary, to assist us and watch by us, to guard us from the assaults of our enemies, and to intercede for us with God. Ask Jesus Christ Himself to come to us then, not with the severe aspect of a judge, but with the loving mercy of a father. Ask Him to pardon us our infidelities, our weaknesses, and our faults, and to admit us to His heavenly kingdom. And do thou thyself, O beloved father, be near us at that last passage; encourage us by thy protection; watch over us as thy devoted children. Thou wilt surely not refuse our prayer, O father of Jesus; we choose thee now for our defender, our patron, and our protector through life, and, above all, at the hour of our death.

CHAPTER X.

THE GLORIOUS ST. JOSEPH IS THE MODEL OF
DEVOTION TO MARY.

When we consider the greatness of the God Who was Incarnate in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we become dazzled at the thought of the dignity and the glory of her who was chosen to be His Mother. Mary appears to us pure and spotless, like the azure heavens, which we gaze at in the distance, far above our heads; like the book sealed with seven seals, which we can never hope to open, unless some one more perfect, more powerful than we are, come to our assistance.

We require a guide to lead us to Mary, to instruct our intellect in the great mysteries of her holiness, her greatness, and her tenderness. We want some one to strengthen our will, that we may render a fitting homage to this great Queen, the beloved of God Himself. We want some

one who will manifest to us, not in a general and vague manner, but in a particular and practical way, how we are to honour Mary; how we are to mingle devotion with respect, and childlike confidence with the feeling of our unworthiness. In these uncertainties, we can choose no better guide, no more perfect model, than her loving spouse and faithful servant, St. Joseph. St. Joseph will certainly not refuse to instruct our ignorance, to help our weakness, to teach us how we should act in order to render ourselves pleasing to our Blessed Mother. We find that the most simple and unskilful pupils advance in knowledge, and seem to be transformed into other men, when they meet with a kind, patient, and indulgent master, who has compassion on their dulness, and bears with their slowness of comprehension. This loving kindness we shall find in St. Joseph. It is true, that, until now, our souls have not opened to the truth that our devotion to Mary has been more natural than supernatural, founded more on feeling than on grace; that, in order to become true clients, we require a complete change

of heart. But St. Joseph will effect all this if we invoke his aid ; he will be our father, our teacher, and our model, and, with his assistance, we shall attain to the object of our desires ; we shall be admitted to close union with Mary the Mother of Jesus.

O how great is the sanctity of Joseph ; the more we meditate on him, the more we find how impossible it is to explain, or even to fathom the depths of his holiness. What an incalculable favour to be chosen to spend thirty years in the constant company of the Blessed Virgin, to be allowed to contemplate the perfect purity of Mary, in body, mind, and heart !

Who can describe or even imagine the beauty of the Queen of Angels ; the sweetness of her smile, the angelic loveliness of her eyes, the incomparable modesty of all her movements ? But St. Joseph could daily, hourly, gaze upon her beauty, a privilege which the very angels might envy. And not only could he gaze upon her, but he could also enjoy the charms of her conversation. Mary would not refuse to converse with her spouse in that holy

solitude into which no worldly tumult ever penetrated. In these intimate and familiar conversations, Mary would reveal herself to St. Joseph ; he could admire the greatness of her intelligence, the vastness of her knowledge, above all, the supernatural lights and graces with which God had enriched His Mother.

St. Joseph had, also, constantly before his eyes the virtues and examples of his chaste spouse. Her every action displayed the beauty and purity of her soul. It is a great happiness for us, if we are ever privileged enough to dwell with a soul favoured by God, to see such a one advance from virtue to virtue, until he arrives at true sanctity. But what is this compared to the privilege Joseph enjoyed of living with Mary, who, from the first beginning, possessed more virtue than the greatest of saints ? Mary alone possesses in her soul more than all the virtues of all the saints united ; more than the zeal of the Apostles ; more than the purity of the virgins ; more than the courage of the martyrs ; more than the merits of all the saints. Oh, how blessed was St. Joseph, who re-

ceived Mary as a gift from God ; who was chosen to guard, to protect, to support this master-piece of the Divine Wisdom, the object of the Divine Complacency from all eternity. O happy Joseph, who, during these thirty years, never offended or grieved in any way the immaculate purity of his spouse. Oh blessed, most blessed was this holy patriarch, who deserved the love and confidence of Mary, and remained united to her by the most sacred ties until death.

What men desire above all, is not so much esteem, or respect, or obedience ; they want *love*. To be loved, this is the wish of all ; no sacrifice seems too great to obtain this treasure. A little love is worth more than all the riches in the world : no matter how poor the person who loves them may be, no matter how short-lived their affection may prove, men are proud and happy to feel they are loved. But how happy, how fortunate would that man be, who could say truly and with certainty, that he was tenderly and sincerely loved by the Mother of God ! St. Joseph has possessed this happiness. The most pure

Virgin Mary bore to Joseph all the love that a good spouse must bear to her husband ; no other creature was ever favoured with the love she bestowed upon *him* ; she brought him a pure and innocent heart ; she gave him her first and warmest affections, and this love, this union was preserved inviolate until her death. Oh, happy Joseph, we can never realize the greatness of his privilege ; we are too poor, too weak, too sinful to be able to imagine, for a moment, what were the pure delights of those years spent in the solitude and silence of Nazareth.

Can we imagine that St. Joseph, the just man, was incapable of offering a fitting return to Mary for the love she lavished on him ? We may be surprised, at first sight, at the simplicity and exterior roughness of the one who was chosen by God to be the companion of this incomparable Virgin ; but if we penetrate into the secrets of his soul, we shall find him more worthy of Mary's love, and more pleasing in her eyes, than a whole army of kings or princes would have been. With what respect did he not always treat her, how constantly

he kept before his eyes the immense difference there was between them; and yet this humility never in any way impeded the ardour of his love. He knew how to mingle tenderness with respect; his soul was so pure and spotless, his fidelity to grace so complete, that her love found no resistance, no obstacle in his unworthiness, and thus he could enjoy the ineffable delights of love without losing one particle of his humility.

Let us, then, "go to Joseph," and beg him, most earnestly and confidently, to give us the graces we need in order to obtain a true, sincere, solid devotion to Mary. If, until now, we have been negligent in honouring her, let us beseech him to make reparation for us, to obtain for us a knowledge of her beauty and greatness; that for the future we may be her devoted servants. If we wish to be pleasing to her, let us constantly unite all the prayers we address to her to the acts of love and respect which he offered her whilst on earth; and let us beg of Mary, for *his* sake, to receive our prayers and accept our homage. The glorious patriarch will correct any imperfec-

tions of which we may be guilty, and, uniting to our unworthy acts the treasures of his loving heart, he will offer them to Mary for us, and then they will not be rejected.

CHAPTER XI.

ST. JOSEPH MODEL OF DEVOTION TO JESUS.

We must not allow our great love to St. Joseph to lead us into any exaggerated ways of speaking, or into any unreality. We willingly acknowledge that St. Joseph is not the *principal* model of devotion to Jesus, nor the *principal* one to whom we should apply to obtain union with Him. Mary is the principal means chosen by God to unite us to Jesus; the principal channel by which He gives us His grace, the great model we should follow. No saint, not even St. Joseph, can claim the same union with Jesus. From the time of the visit of the Archangel Gabriel at the moment of the Incarnation, Mary was united to Jesus with a closeness that no other creature ever has, or ever can attain. But must we, then, conclude that St. Joseph has no power to help us to attain the union we desire? Oh, surely not. We affirm

that, after Mary, there is no saint, there can be no saint who is more capable of teaching us true devotion to Jesus, than St. Joseph. In order to understand this, let us remember that Mary does not absorb, so to speak, Jesus in herself. She is, no doubt, far above all the others in honouring and loving her Divine Son, but still we find others following in her footsteps, and loving and adoring our Lord under her direction. Look at Anne and Simeon, Elizabeth, Zachary, St. John the Baptist, St. Mary Magdalen, the Apostles and Disciples of our Lord, all of whom shared with Mary the honour of following and conversing with Jesus whilst upon earth. Can we imagine that the homage and adoration of these faithful servants diminishes, or lessens in any way, the merits or the glory of our Blessed Lady? Oh no, such delusion is absurd; we know, on the contrary, that, as she leads and guides them all to Jesus, the more these faithful servants and adorers are multiplied, the more they show forth her power and her perfections. It is true all graces come to us through her, but she loves to distribute these favours through

the saints who owe their sanctity principally to her intercession.

Now, amongst all the saints (as we have already proved), there are none to be compared to St. Joseph. The others, like St. John the Baptist, St. Mary Magdalen, the Apostles, were with Jesus only for a short time; they did not generally have Him alone, others were there to lessen their happiness. How often must they have wished to speak to Him alone, to have Him for a short time all to themselves, to be in solitude, in silence, alone with Jesus. This was the happiness enjoyed by St. Joseph. Not for a short time only, but for long years he possessed Jesus; he lived alone with Jesus and Mary at Nazareth.

We know that Mary's presence can never have been an obstacle to the loving interviews, in which the Son of God infused into the soul of Joseph those supernatural lights and favours which his simplicity rendered him so capable of receiving. What is irksome to two friends is the presence of a third person, who is indifferent, who comes like a dull weight between those two loving hearts; a person who can-

not understand the love and enthusiasm of their friendship. But how should the presence of the most loving Virgin Mary be an obstacle to the ineffable conversations of Jesus and Joseph? On the contrary, this "Mother of beautiful love" employed her power in disposing Joseph's soul to receive these divine favours more perfectly, and thus she united her Spouse and her Son in a closer union. Oh, how happy would that man be who should be favoured by God with an insight into those blessed hours which Joseph spent with Jesus at Nazareth! But alas! our souls are not pure enough, our love is not deep enough to understand these things, and we must leave with regret these sacred mysteries, and proceed with our considerations.

St. Joseph opens to us especially the mysteries of the Sacred Infancy, and of the hidden life of Jesus. He will lead us to Jesus at Bethlehem, or to Jesus at Nazareth, when as a Boy He worked unknown and despised in the carpenter's shop. St. Joseph was not present at the crucifixion; he did not witness the glorious resurrection or ascension of our Lord. But he

was present at His sacred birth in poverty at Bethlehem; he was with Him during the flight into Egypt; he witnessed day after day for eighteen years His hidden life of subjection and sacrifice: and it is these virtues of silence and humility that he teaches us.

Manifest to us, then, O glorious saint, the secret beauties of the hidden life of our Divine Lord: we are not yet fit to contemplate the glories of Jesus risen: we have not courage enough to ascend the rugged path of Calvary; we cannot yet bring our slothful natures to love the bitterness of the cross. Come to our aid, O loving saint; lead us into the peaceful House of Nazareth, that blessed abode in which we may obtain rest and strength to enable us to advance in virtue. Jesus Christ Himself did not begin by the glory of His resurrection, or by the agonizing sufferings of His Passion. He began by the simple path of His infancy and hidden life. We wish to imitate Him, and therefore we come to thee, O blessed St. Joseph, to ask to be admitted to share with thee the joys and sorrows of those

thirty years. We will contemplate, in thy company and with thy help, the Incarnate Word, an Infant in the stable at Bethlehem; we will meditate on that humility which caused the Everlasting God to become a weak Child, born in cold and poverty, on a winter's night. We will with thee, O great patriarch, watch His growth in age and wisdom; we will admire His sweetness, His docility, His obedience to all thy commands.

Bring us to Him, O Joseph, and let us learn with thee some of the heavenly secrets which He taught thee. O Joseph, happy friend, happy disciple, happy father of Jesus, thou knowest all the sweetness, all the graces to be drawn from these silent hidden years; thou hast experienced what graces and favours Jesus will bestow upon those who spend their life with Him at Nazareth. Have pity on us, admit us into that Holy House, that so we may say, like thee and with thee, "*Hæc requies mea in sæculum sæculi. Hic habitabo quoniam elegi eam.*" "This is the place of my rest for ever. Here will I remain, for I have chosen it."

CHAPTER XII.

ST. JOSEPH IS THE PATRON OF ALL
CHRISTIANS.

We have seen that St. Joseph has an immense number of clients in all ranks of society. He is the patron of husbands, of fathers, of virgins, of priests, of the poor, of interior souls, of humble souls, of the dying, the model and teacher of devotion to Mary and to Jesus; but now we are going still further, and we assert that St. Joseph is the patron of all Christians without exception.

This is certainly one of the most glorious privileges of the spouse of Mary. Other saints seem to choose amongst Christians a certain class or portion, which they watch over and defend; but St. Joseph does not confine his protection to any particular class, nation, or number. All Christians belong to him; the Lord has appointed him prince of all His posses-

sions ; and therefore all souls who belong to Jesus Christ, belong also to His foster-father. We shall have no difficulty in proving this assertion by good and solid reasonings.

We know that the Blessed Virgin Mary has received from Jesus Christ universal dominion over all men, so that all graces received by Christians pass through her hands. This is not an article of faith, but it is asserted by so many holy doctors, it agrees so perfectly with the doctrine of the Church concerning Mary, that we can have no hesitation in adopting it. But St. Joseph must resemble Mary if he is truly her spouse. All the holy doctors agree and unanimously declare that St. Joseph was really the virginal spouse of the Virgin Mary, that their union was a real marriage. If it is so, in order to make a marriage suitable, even in the eyes of men, there must be a resemblance between the two. One cannot be very much above the other in position or power. Joseph, then, must be like Mary, not only in purity, in faith, and other virtues, but he must also share in her prerogatives.

If all Christians are committed to the care of the Blessed Virgin, if she exercises a universal sway over all without exception, St. Joseph must share with her this merciful privilege, and possess power over all who are subject to her. But St. Joseph must not only be like Mary, as father he must also resemble Jesus. Some think that he must have had in his exterior a resemblance to his Divine Son, as children usually, in some measure at least, resemble their parents. We are not, however, alluding at present to the exterior likeness which may have existed between Jesus and Joseph, but of the interior resemblance in the gifts they possessed. We cannot doubt that our Lord would cause St. Joseph's soul in some measure to resemble His own. In this case the usual order of things would be inverted, and the Son, out of love and gratitude towards His foster-father, would adorn his soul with interior graces that resembled, as much as possible, His own graces and gifts.

St. Joseph, then, as father of Jesus, will take care of all those over whom Jesus Christ has authority. Our Lord extends

His power over all Churches and all nations; the whole world belongs to Him, and therefore St. Joseph is justly and by right the *Patron of the Universal Church*. All Christians are the members of Christ; He is the Head, we are the body: how then can St. Joseph be the father and protector of Jesus, without being also our father and patron?

But must not sinners at least be excepted from the paternal solicitude of St. Joseph? St. Joseph was the purest of saints, how can he interest himself in those who are plunged in the guilt of sin? St. Joseph was the most faithful servant and greatest friend of Jesus Christ, how can he help hating those who blaspheme the Son of God, crucify Him afresh, and trample His Precious Blood under their feet? St. Paul tells us there can be no union between Christ and Belial, between light and darkness; how then can St. Joseph have any intercourse of love or mercy with sinners? This objection can have no weight with true Christians, who realize the mercy of God. Do we not find the Immaculate Virgin Mary, she who

alone amongst all creatures is absolutely free from stain, the Queen of Virgins, turn with love to the most hardened sinners? Do we not invoke her as the refuge of sinners, and what sinner need ever fear to have recourse to her? Why, then, may not St. Joseph share in the merciful compassion of his spouse? Joseph, as we said above, was formed with an admirable resemblance to Mary, in order that they might be united by the ties of love as well as of marriage. Joseph, then, must have received at his birth a compassionate heart; and these merciful dispositions must have been very much increased by his intercourse with the most clement Virgin Mary. It is, then, only natural to believe that St. Joseph watches over sinners with tender love, and helps and waits for them with the greatest patience, to enlighten them and guide them out of their darkness and misery.

This prerogative of mercy in St. Joseph was clearly foreshown in his prototype, the Joseph of the Old Testament. How much did his brethren offend against him; how ungratefully and cruelly they behaved

to him: and yet with what compassion he treats them! Instead of delivering them up, as he justly might, to be punished as they deserved, he only submits them to a few insignificant trials, which last but a short time, and then, unable any longer to contain the love and tenderness which fills his heart, he thus speaks to them: "Come nearer to me. I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt. Be not afraid, and let it not seem to you a hard case that you sold me into these countries; for God sent me before you into Egypt for your preservation. . . . Not by your counsel was I sent hither, but by the will of God, who hath made me as it were a father to Pharaoh, and lord of his whole house."

Oh, how tenderly he consoles them! how he excuses, as well as he can, their malice and wickedness. He embraces, not only the innocent Benjamin, but all his brethren, thus encouraging them to speak to him.

And shall we believe that St. Joseph, the spouse of Mary, the Mother of Mercy, the father of Jesus, Who is Love itself,

will not have pity upon unfortunate sinners? Will he not speak to them with gentle words, with generous and tender compassion? Will he allow them to die without help? Will he refuse to give them the food they are so much in need of? No, we can never believe it. Far better than Pharaoh's minister can St. Joseph say to us: "Fear not; I will feed you and your children." For his merciful charity will not only take care of us, but will bring graces and blessings upon our friends and relations. We may then confidently abandon ourselves without fear to this our powerful protector, our merciful father. Many souls fall into a state of over-anxiety and solicitude, trying always to guard themselves from dangers by human prudence. But we will not imitate this conduct; we find in St. Joseph a father full of watchfulness to guard us in danger, full of light to guide us, full of strength to defend us; let us then rest as little children in his loving arms.

We do not find children who have a good and kind father constantly inquiring where they shall find food or clothing, or

what will become of them. They trust in their father, and live happily under his care. But in St. Joseph we have a father far more loving and powerful than any earthly parent; why then should we insult him by doubting his love? This is not the example that Jesus gives us. We see Him, when a Child, sleeping peacefully in St. Joseph's arms, as if He were not aware that Herod was seeking to destroy Him. But if Jesus sleeps St. Joseph is awake. The Eternal Father has entrusted him with the care of His well-beloved Son, and St. Joseph will not be unfaithful to his charge. He rises at night, arranges all, manages all, and places Jesus and Mary in a place of safety, beyond the reach of their cruel persecutor.

The same thing happens spiritually to our souls, if we will trust ourselves to the paternal direction of St. Joseph. We are as little children, incapable of guiding ourselves; we are in reality as weak and as ignorant as Jesus appeared to be. The devil, who is a more cruel tyrant even than Herod, is seeking the life of our souls; he spares neither snares nor open violence.

What are we to do? How can we hope to escape from so powerful an adversary? We must act as Jesus did; we must confide in the care and watchfulness of our father Joseph; he will arrange all, he will defeat the plans of our enemies, and bear us to a place of refuge, sometimes even without letting us perceive the danger we were in.

Let us, then, repeat with confidence what the Church says for us on the feast of his glorious patronage: "*Si consistent adversum me castra non timebit cor meum; si exurgat adversum me prælium in hoc ego sperabo. In te cantatio mea semper quoniam tu adjutor fortis. Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto.*" "If armies in camp should stand together against me, my heart shall not fear. If a battle should rise up against me, in this will I be confident. My hope is in Thee, for Thou art a strong protector."

CHAPTER XIII.

DEVOTION TO ST. JOSEPH WAS UNKNOWN IN
THE FIRST AGES OF THE CHURCH.

What privileges, what prerogatives, we have been contemplating in the glorious patriarch St. Joseph! If we consider him in himself, we find in him perfect purity, profound humility, marvellous silence, the gift of prayer, and all other virtues which are contained in the title of *just*. If we consider him with regard to the faithful, he is the protector of numberless classes of men, nay more, the patron of the universal Church. If we consider him with regard to other saints, we find him to surpass them all in grace and holiness. He alone was chosen to be the virginal spouse of Mary, the father and guardian of Jesus. When we consider all these glorious privileges, all the claims which he has to the love and respect of the faithful, we should fancy, that, from the earliest ages of the

Church, men would have vied with each other in honouring him; that his name would be found wherever the names of Jesus and Mary were mentioned, and that these three, who formed the earthly trinity, could never be separated in the minds or hearts of Christians. But if we consult history and tradition, we find that, on the contrary, St. Joseph was completely ignored in the early ages of Christianity. His name is not mentioned in the sacred Canon of the Mass, although the Apostles and numerous martyrs are commemorated there; we find no feast or even commemoration of him in the Breviary until the 15th century. We should have imagined that the faithful would have been anxious to secure the favour of so powerful a protector, and that the Feast of the Patronage of St. Joseph would be one of the oldest in the Church. And this beautiful feast, with its office, exciting us so strongly to confidence and love, was instituted in our own times. (A.D. 1847.)

We will endeavour to offer some explanation of these facts, which are, we allow, at first sight surprising. We will first

give a universal reason for this apparent neglect, which applies to St. Joseph in common with other saints. It was not fitting, that, in the early ages of Christianity, the saints should receive such great honour and veneration as they now do. The pagans and newly converted-Christians would too easily have confounded the relative honour paid by the Church to servants and friends of God, with the divine honour which is due to God alone, and would thus have been exposed to fall back into idolatry. St. Joseph could not have been excepted from this law, which affected, in some degree, our Lady herself. But this reason is not sufficient to explain the obscurity in which St. Joseph remained long after the first ages of the Church, when other saints were receiving great and popular honours. We must, then, have recourse to some other reasoning by which to account for this strange fact.

We will, in the first place, remark that St. Joseph was, later on, to be raised to a very high place in the Church. It is for this very reason that he was left so long in obscurity. God wished to hon-

our him with an admirable glory and exaltation in the latter ages of the Church, and therefore He kept him for many centuries hidden, in order that his light might shine forth with greater brightness hereafter. Nothing appears to us more unjust than the obscurity in which our glorious patriarch lived in the holy house of Nazareth. But St. Joseph's feelings and dispositions were much more perfect than ours. Far from wishing to be known and honoured, he loved this obscurity, and endeavoured to remain hidden and unknown. Forgetting all his titles to esteem, he plunged deeper into the humiliations of his poor and despised condition, in order to imitate the example of Jesus and Mary, and to expiate the pride and vain glory of men. In all the prayers and petitions which he so frequently addressed to God, he asked not for riches or honours, or the goods of this world, but for the grace to be unknown and despised by men, to be kept far from all human praise or glory, loved and known by God only. We may believe that God was not deaf to the prayer of His servant, "the persevering prayer of

the just is all-powerful with God ;” and so He granted to His faithful servant the grace he asked of Him, by allowing him to remain in obscurity, not only during his whole life, but even for many centuries after his death. His great merits and virtues were not, however, to remain without a just reward ; the more St. Joseph humbled himself, the more God would exalt him in His own good time. Other saints may have been less humbled, but they will also be less glorified, for the glory is proportioned to the humiliation: “ *Qui se humiliat exaltabitur.*” We may, then, in the first place, explain the obscurity of St. Joseph in the first ages, by the exceeding glory he was to receive in the last.

In the second place, we must remember that the office of St. Joseph towards Jesus, was to watch over His infancy, and the years of His youth. He does not appear in the glorious mysteries of the Resurrection, or the sorrowful mysteries of the Passion ; he was the companion of Jesus during the years when He was hidden. It was not at first sight, so to speak, that men could enter into the mysterious beau-

ties of the hidden life. They had to be instructed in the mysteries of the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord ; in the mysteries of religion, which it was necessary for them to know. But they were not admitted into the familiar intercourse of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, into the holy house of Nazareth. These divine communications required purer hearts, and a more persevering virtue. Holy Church accomplished by degrees the wonderful transformation which she effected in these barbarious nations, but she had to practise great patience, and to spend many centuries of labour over this great enterprize. But when they were purified from their sins and vices ; when they became more closely united to God, they were not satisfied with honouring the exterior mysteries of religion, but they endeavoured to penetrate into the interior and hidden life of our Lord.

We can now understand why devotion to St. Joseph is less ancient than devotion to the martyrs and doctors of the Church. These illustrious saints represented to the faithful the Death and Resurrection of our

Lord, and those who were witnesses of their combat and victory were naturally eager to honour them. But St. Joseph, being hidden in the obscurity of the first years of our Lord's life, was forgotten, until Christians, as they became more perfect, were more able to appreciate his sanctity.

May this blessed and sweet devotion increase more and more among the faithful. It is certainly a motive of consolation and hope for us to find that devotion to St. Joseph is becoming popular. The more we invoke this great saint, the more we endeavour to propagate and increase his love in the hearts of others, the more we shall find that he leads us nearer and nearer to Jesus and Mary, that he teaches us more of the secrets of an interior life, and unites us closer to God. We should then thank God, Who, in these latter days, has given us this devotion to encourage and strengthen us in the trials and difficulties with which we are surrounded. Besides the private devotions of the faithful, we have now three annual feasts in honour of this great patriarch: the Feast of the Espousals on the 23rd of January; the 19th of March,

which is set apart to commemorate his virtues and privileges; and the glorious Feast of his Patronage, which is kept on the 3rd Sunday after Easter.

But those souls, who, by the grace of God, are led to adopt this devotion, are not content with honouring St. Joseph on these three days. They imitate St. Teresa; St. Bernardin of Sienna, the great Gerson; Suarez, and many others, and never let a day pass without offering some homage to their glorious patron. They invoke him constantly in all their necessities; they confide to him the care of their souls and bodies; they recommend to his protection all they have to do; they publish everywhere the great favours they receive from him, and do all in their power to increase his glory and devotion to him. In their prayers, in their writings, in their conversation, they always place St. Joseph first among the saints, next to Jesus and Mary; even before those whom they consider their fathers, the founders of the religious orders to which they belong, so that the names of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, are never separated in their hearts.

But we must not imagine that the glory of St. Joseph has reached its highest point. No, our glorious saint will still increase, his devotion will spread more and more amongst men; his power will become more manifest. Continue then, O Joseph, to increase in power and glory, not only in the Church, but also in our hearts; take there the place which belongs to thee by so many titles, as our father, protector, and guide. Make us advance in the ways of the interior life; unite us more and more intimately to Jesus and Mary, that we may more worthily glorify with them the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

CHAPTER XIV.

GLORY OF ST. JOSEPH IN HEAVEN.

We cannot better conclude this little book than in raising our minds to our heavenly country, where our blessed father St. Joseph awaits us, to place us near to himself in the joy of the Lord. In the midst of the troubles and anxieties of this life, let us gain strength and courage by meditating on heaven, on the glory which our great patron enjoys there. Let this thought be constantly present to our minds, to help us to despise all earthly things, and live only for God.

The first and greatest joy of heaven is the Vision of God: "Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the joys which God hath prepared for those who love Him." To *see* God face to face as He is! This is the reward exceeding great of those who, in this life, have endeavoured faith-

fully and humbly to serve Him. But which of the saints will be the highest in glory, which will be the nearest to God? Those, without doubt, who have been nearest to God upon earth; those who were most closely united to Him here below. What, then, will be the glory of St. Joseph in heaven, who was so closely united with God upon earth, who lived and worked only for Him? His very office of guardian of Jesus caused him to be in constant union, not only with Jesus Christ, but also with God the Father, Whom he consulted, so to speak, in all his actions. What, then, will be his reward? With what admirable light will not St. Joseph be repaid for the intrepid constancy with which he executed the designs of God in the midst of the darkness of this life.

Besides the ineffable joy of the Beatific Vision, the blessed will also behold, with infinite delight, the adorable Humanity of our Lord. They will approach with loving respect to Jesus; they will kiss the glorious marks of His five sacred wounds; they will find Him infinitely more beautiful and more loving than they had pictured Him

on earth, even in moments of the most ardent devotion. But St. Joseph will, without doubt, occupy, after Mary, the nearest place to Jesus Christ in heaven, on account of the marvellous superiority which he exercised over Him when on earth. The other saints are like faithful servants, who have laboured diligently in the vineyard of the Lord, and who are therefore admitted to the exceeding great reward which God has promised to His faithful servants; but He will remember that, when on earth, He gave obedience, love, and respect, to St. Joseph, and He will therefore recompense his services in a higher and more liberal degree than any others.

The sight of Mary, our Queen and our Mother, will also be a cause of joy to the blessed. How many times, when on earth, have they tried to picture to themselves her immaculate beauty, and now they will fix their eyes upon it, and see how far it surpasses the most glowing pictures of their devout imaginations. But what shall we say of St. Joseph with regard to Mary? Where shall we place the faithful com-

panion, the pure spouse of this ever-blessed Virgin, if not close to her side? The other saints are her children, and the Mother of Mercy receives them as such, with marks of ineffable tenderness; but Joseph is her spouse, her love for him must be far stronger and more tender than that she bears to any other saint. What more can we say? The happiness of heaven is increased by the company of the saints and blessed angels, who, united in an unbroken harmony of peace and joy, increase by their love the happiness of each soul. But will not St. Joseph have some special prerogatives, some marks of glory to distinguish him from the other saints and blessed in heaven? Will they treat him entirely as an equal? Oh no, everything in heaven is order and harmony, and therefore we cannot but think that St. Joseph receives from the saints and angels the homage of a loving respect, due to the foster-father of Jesus and the spouse of Mary.

We may piously believe, on the authority of holy writers, that the glory of the resurrection was anticipated for St. Joseph,

and that his body is already united to his soul in glory. We read in the Gospel that when Jesus Christ expired on the cross, the tombs opened, and many of the saints appeared in Jerusalem. We do not know the names of these favoured souls, but we may confidently presume that St. Joseph was at their head. No saint received such great favours from God; no saint equalled St. Joseph in innocence and purity; no saint approached so near to the Sacred Humanity of Jesus. This gift of God, like others, should be without repentance, therefore we may well suppose that this privilege was not denied him, and that he formed part of the glorious troop who accompanied our Lord to heaven on His admirable Ascension.

But who will be able to describe the beauty of St. Joseph? Who will depict for us the marvellous perfections which render his body the mirror of his peaceful soul? Who can reveal to us the sanctity of that soul, and the infinite glory with which it is inundated. Dazzled by so much splendour, unable to find words in which to describe our thoughts, let us have

recourse to prayer. Let us earnestly and confidently implore the great St. Joseph to look down upon us in pity and in love, from the glorious throne on which he is seated next to Jesus and Mary. And in order to be more sure of being heard, let us employ the words the Church addresses to him, and say: "*Respice de cœlo et vide, et visita vineam istam, et perfice eam.*" "Look down from heaven and see, visit this vineyard and make it perfect."

O Joseph, from the bright and glorious heaven where thou reignest, look down upon this miserable earth; visit this vineyard of the Catholic Church spread all over the world, and assist her to bring forth fruits of virtue and grace. "*Respice de Cœlo et vide.*" "Look down and see." See our faults and our imperfections, our hardness of heart and ingratitude; see how Jesus is forgotten by His creatures; see how the malice of men is armed against His Church; see, and have compassion. Look upon us as a father, as a friend, as a protector; thou art ours, and we are thine; thou belongest to us as a patron and a

father; we belong to thee as weak but loving children.

But do not only *see* our miseries, O blessed father, but "*vide et visita*," visit thy vineyard by thy powerful and efficacious assistance. O Patron of the Church, assist the Church, keep her as an enclosed garden, full of rich perfumes; do not allow the hand of the spoiler, of the heretic, or the persecutor, to defile thy inheritance. Behold how many miseries and misfortunes have assailed this vineyard, how many branches are withered, how many are dead, how many leaves and fruits have been stolen by the enemy. Therefore arise, O Joseph, and come; come in thy beauty, thy glory, and thy strength, "*et perfice eam*," "make her perfect." Make her beautiful and fair, purge her from all that is withered, from all that is dead; restore to her joy and gladness, that, with thy help and thy care, her children may arrive at that heavenly kingdom where thou reignest, close to Mary, close to Jesus, close to the Most Blessed Trinity, and that they may sing with thee for all eternity the joyous Alleluia.

Alleluia! Be Thou praised, O God, Creator of all things. O God of mercy and of power, mayest Thou be praised in heaven and upon earth, by angels and by men, for all the glorious privileges Thou hast bestowed on St. Joseph, and for all the innumerable graces St. Joseph bestows upon us.

Glory be to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Amen.



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